

# The Professionals Guild of Ohio



## PGO UNION NEWS

**March 2011**

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### **Senate Passes Anti-Union Changes to Collective Bargaining Law**

The legislation seeking to gut collective bargaining in the state of Ohio has passed out of the Senate and is now headed to the House of Representatives. What follows are some of the proposed changes to the collective bargaining law that would decimate your current rights.

There is proposed language in the bill that would prohibit bargaining over health care benefits and require an employer's insurance premium contributions to not exceed 85 percent. The bill would also forbid a public employer from agreeing to pay any portion of the employee's contribution to a retirement system.

The bill will eliminate the right of all public employees to strike. The right to strike is an integral part of the collective bargaining process. And, anti-union advocates know that the ability to effectively negotiate with management relies in large part on the ability to withhold services to get a decent agreement.

Other wage and benefit areas would also be affected. Sick leave accumulation would change: sick leave would accumulate to a maxi-

imum of 10 days per year. Salary and wage schedules will be replaced with a pay range system that eliminates annual service step increases and instead provides increases supposedly based on "merit."

Subcontracting would be a prohibited subject of bargaining. The bill will allow subcontracting or privatization of public services by nullifying no subcontracting provisions currently in effect in collective bargaining agreements. It will also prohibit a collective bargaining agreement from providing that a subcontractor hire the public employees left out in the cold after a move by the public employer to privatize services.

Negotiations as we know them will change drastically if this bill is implemented as written. If a fact finder's recommendation is rejected, the parties would present their last best offer to the legislative body to choose the one that will become the final three year agreement.

The bill and its amendment passed the Senate by a very close margin, much closer than anyone following Ohio politics would have predicted. Now the bill will be considered by the House. **We urge you to call your State Representatives and tell them to vote NO on Senate Bill 5.**

**A Call To Action:  
Kill The Bill**

A wave of anti-union animus has taken hold in the great state of Ohio and public employees have been wrongly targeted as “the cause” of the budget crisis. This anti-union, anti public worker campaign is the result of highly financed corporate sponsored propaganda campaign.

Several research institutions have recently released reports showing that public employees are not responsible for this economic mess and that taking away their rights, or limiting their rights, to collectively bargain does nothing to improve a state’s fiscal health. Policy Matters Ohio released its report “Press Briefing on Unions, Working Families, Public Employees and Public Budgets” which revealed that the states that have eliminated collective bargaining for state employees (Indiana, Missouri and Kentucky) are still facing budget shortfalls. Moreover, states that prohibit collective bargaining for public workers (e.g., Arizona, North Carolina, Nevada) have budget deficits exceeding thirty percent while states that promote collective bargaining such as Massachusetts, Montana, New Mexico and South Dakota have deficits under 10 percent. The conclusion is that the right to collectively bargain is not the cause of the economic woes in any state in the US.

Governor Kasich has stated he believes public employees are over compensated and wants public employees to take pay cuts and forgo their collective bargaining rights to balance Ohio’s budget. The Economic Policy Institute, a non-profit think tank in Washington D.C. studied the compensation of Ohio’s public employees and concluded that public employees are actually paid less than the private sector in wages and benefits.

It is apparent public employees sacrifice to work for the public good and punishing public employees by blaming them for this economic crisis and demanding cuts to their already lower-than-market salaries will do nothing to improve our economy. In fact, what it will do is create stagnation in the consumption of goods which will aggravate and prolong the recession. The report also concludes that unions are necessary for public employees to keep wages

and benefits from being driven down even further by pressures to cut costs.

The PGO is encouraging its members to call their state representatives and voice their opposition to SB 5. Please also start conversations with your friends, family, neighbors and co-workers about the importance of collective bargaining and encourage them to call their state reps too. Provide the statistics in this article; tell them states that have eliminated collective bargaining are in worse condition than states that have not. If we don’t speak up now, we won’t have a voice later.



*PGO demonstrators, from left to right, are **Kim Feldner, Marie Neiswonger, PGO General Counsel John Campbell-Orde and Roy Higgins.** In the background are **Becky Davenport and Lynn Pinkleman.***

**Democracy In Action:  
Kill The Bill**

Several PGO members from Toledo and Guernsey Counties, came to Columbus on Tuesday, March 1 to show their opposition to SB 5. They joined thousands of other protesters on the grounds of the state house and inside the statehouse building, chanting slogans and rallying against a bill that would devastate our rights to collectively bargain in Ohio. The crowd was amazing, the size of which the statehouse has not seen in fifteen years.

Lucas County Children Services members included PGO Council 13 President **Joe DeStazio, Joy Taylor, Melody Banks, Harold Stevens, Lynn Pinkleman, Becky Davenport,** and retired members

*Ethel Kunkel and Joyce Ranson. Roy Higgins, President of PGO Council 8, Marie Neiswonger and Kim Feldner from Cambridge, Ohio represented Guernsey County Children Services.*

We want to thank these members for coming out and encourage everyone to attend rallies in your communities. Also, please join us at the statehouse for more rallies as SB 5 makes its way to the House. We will provide updates on rallies and SB 5 information as these become available.

**Public Employees: Myths and Realities**

With all the venom directed at public employees these days, it’s hard to separate the facts from the attacks. Here’s a guide to common claims made about government spending, taxes, and public employees.

**The Claim: Government employees are overpaid.**

The Facts: The Economic Policy Institute measured state and local public workers against their private sector counterparts with the same age, experience, and education. They found that public workers earn about 11 percent less.

Public workers had better benefits on average, but even when health care and retirement were included, public workers were still 4 percent behind private sector counterparts.

Claims that state and local government workers are overpaid often fail to account for their education and experience. Fifty-four percent have at least a four-year college degree, compared to 35 percent in the private sector.

**The Claim: The federal deficit is out of control.**

The Facts: It’s true that this year’s budget deficit—projected to be 10.3 percent of U.S. economic activity—is the highest since World War II. Whether it’s a problem depends on your time frame and how we address it.

Short-term government spending was the only thing that kept the economy from cratering in 2008. It staved off a second Great Depression.

With no private sector investment in sight, public spending will be the only engine for job creation



in the foreseeable future. Aside from the pain created by high unemployment, no jobs means no recovery for tax collections and, therefore, a widening deficit.

The deficit is a long-term problem if we do nothing, but before doing something we have to look at spending and revenues. The bulk of federal spending is on the military (22 percent) and health care, including Medicare, Medicaid, and children’s health programs (21 percent).

The obvious place to start trimming is today’s military budget, which is two and a half times what it was ten years ago. Health care costs are also skyrocketing, because they are driven by for-profit health care. A single-payer system like “Medicare for all” would correct that.

**The Claim: Taxes are too high.**

The Facts: Depends whose taxes you mean. According to Citizens for Tax Justice, overall taxes in the U.S. are the third lowest among industrialized countries (only Turkey and Mexico are lower). Corporate taxes are also lower than in most other industrial nations.

But there are inequities—and they favor the rich. People at the bottom of the income ladder, the lowest 20 percent, pay almost twice as much of their income in state and local taxes as the top 1 percent. The poor pay 11 percent, the rich just 6 percent.

At the end of World War II corporations paid more than a third of all taxes collected by the federal government. Today they pay only 10 percent. The burden was shifted to individuals, and as taxes on the wealthy were cut over the last 30 years, the liability has been transferred to working people.

**The Claim: The private sector is more efficient than government.**

The Facts: Advocates claim outsourcing will save money. But after more than two decades of experience, reality isn't so clear-cut.

Cost overruns combined with the cost of contract monitoring and administration often makes privatization more expensive than in-house services. According to a 2007 survey by the International City/County Management Association, more than one in five local governments had brought previously outsourced services back in house.

In most cases insufficient cost savings were cited as a primary reason. And where contracting out does produce savings, they typically come from lower wages and benefits for workers—not some supposed inherent superiority of business.

**The Claim: Government waste, fraud and abuse are rampant.**

The Facts: Government-bashers love to talk about overpaid, do-nothing bureaucrats, but if you're looking for misused tax dollars your best bet is to scour the Chamber of Commerce's membership list. Defense contracts and construction projects like the "Big Dig" in Boston hold taxpayers hostage with wildly inaccurate, often fraudulent cost estimates.

According to the Project on Government Oversight's database of federal contractor misconduct, the top five defense contractors have racked up 156 instances of misconduct since 1995, totaling \$3.57 billion in fraud and waste.

*Reprinted from Labor Notes 12/20/10.*

**We Need Your Help!**

The PGO is updating its membership data base to prepare for the upcoming election of state union officers. If you have moved, or if you have never received mail from PGO, please contact our office to update your contact information.

**PGO Election Scheduled**

The PGO Constitution requires that an election of state union officers be held this year. Nominations for officers must be made by a Nominations Committee composed of one member chosen by each PGO Council. Additional nominations may be made by a petition signed by one percent of the membership and presented to the executive director by April 15. The candidates for the various union offices will be finalized during the Nominations Committee meeting following the April 18 Executive Board meeting. Ballots will be mailed to members in May and must be returned by June 15.

**PGO Council 16 Elects Officers**

Service and Support Specialists at the Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities recently elected officers to a new term. *Beth Graham* has been elected President, the Vice President is *Mark Shrivvers*, and *Mary Perdas* will be the Steward. Congratulations and thank you for serving your co-workers and your union.

**PGO Council 20 Holds 5th Annual Christmas Party**

PGO members, their families, friends and co-workers at the Montgomery County Board of Developmental Disabilities celebrated this past Christmas Holiday in style at PGO Council 20's fifth annual Christmas Party.

