



FACT SHEET

Senate Republicans' Priority Bills for the 128th General Assembly

SB 1 Building Ohio Jobs Part II

Sponsor: Senator Jim Hughes (R-Clintonville)

Allocates the remaining \$340 million of targeted investments identified by the Governor and legislative leaders last session as part of the \$1.57 billion bipartisan economic stimulus package, including all of the following:

- Clean Ohio – Greenfields (recreation, trails and farmland preservation) - \$50 million per fiscal year from state general obligation bond authorized by voters in 2008
- Clean Ohio – Brownfields - \$50 million per fiscal year from liquor profit bonds approved by Ohio voters in 2008
- Biomedical - \$40 million in FY10 and \$20 million in FY11 from tobacco foundation money transfer, pending court challenges
- Bioproducts - \$20 million in FY10 and \$10 million from tobacco foundation money transfer, pending court challenges
- Logistics & Distribution - \$25 million per fiscal year from liquor profit bonds
- Co-Op, Internship Program to link Ohio students with Ohio employers - \$50 million per fiscal year from the General Revenue Fund.

SB 2 Blueprint for Spending Federal Infrastructure Funding

Sponsor: Senator John Carey (R-Wellston)

Provides for the timely allocation of federal stimulus dollars to be used for infrastructure purposes

- Introduced version contains plug numbers for the appropriations based on the January 23, 2009 estimates from the federal government; however, the bill is still being debated in Congress and the bill will be amended to reflect what is ultimately passed.
- Currently appropriates funding for infrastructure priorities through existing mechanisms:
 - Weatherization and energy efficiency through the Ohio Department of Development;
 - Highway construction funding through the Ohio Department of Transportation, requiring that each ODOT district receive at least \$15 million;
 - If federally allowable, \$200 million to the Ohio Public Works Commission for the Local Transportation Improvement Program to replace the budget stabilization funds from the original bipartisan economic stimulus bill, which are now being used to balance the FY2010-11 budget, and
 - School Facilities funding through the Ohio School Facilities Commission.
- An open and transparent legislative process that provides for public input into the allocation of significant taxpayer dollars, is a better public policy than merely sending funds through the state Controlling Board.

SB 3 Small Business Empowerment Act

Sponsor: Senator Keith Faber (R-Celina)

Based on the recommendations of the bipartisan Regulatory Reform Task Force, seeks to break down regulatory barriers that have been impediments to job creation and economic revitalization in Ohio.

- Requires rule-making agencies take a wholesale look at regulations from an economic standpoint -- eliminating regulatory duplication, making adjustments when the cost of

compliance exceeds the benefit of the regulation and ensuring fees and fines are in line with the actual cost of enforcement, by preparing cost-benefit reports and regulatory flexibility analysis of rules that may have an adverse impact on small businesses.

- Creates a Small Business Regulatory Review Board to review any objections to those rules and make recommendations on how to improve them.
- Promotes increased customer service in state agencies by requiring the Director of Administrative Services to establish customer service performance standards for state employees.

SB 4 Performance Audits for Regulatory Agencies

Sponsor: Senator Tim Schaffer (R-Lancaster)

Requires the Auditor of State to conduct performance audits of key regulatory agencies to ensure they are making progress on the goal of promoting common sense business regulation.

- Agencies that would be subject to performance audits include the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Bureau of Workers' Compensation, the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

SB 5 Grants for Grads

Sponsor: Senator Steve Buehrer (R-Delta)

Provides an annual grant program to provide homebuyer down payment assistance to incentivize Ohio residents to live in Ohio after earning their degrees, and to give a needed boost to Ohio's ailing housing market.

- Creates a \$2 million annual program administered by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency to provide 300 eligible applicants down payment assistance toward the closing costs of buying a home in Ohio.
- Applicants must be Ohio residents and must apply for the program within 60 days of graduating from an in-state or out-of-state school.
- Graduates who receive the grant must agree to remain in Ohio for at least five years after graduation. Should they leave the state, they must pay back the grant to the state via a lien that would be placed on the mortgage at the beginning of the loan. The lien would diminish 20 percent each year, ending after the five-year period.
- Funding will be awarded via a lottery system, with grant amounts based on the level of degree obtained -- \$2,500 for an associates degrees; \$5,000 for a bachelor's degree and \$10,000 for a master's degree.

SB 6 Special Education Scholarships

Sponsor: Senator Kevin Coughlin

Establishes a pilot program within the Ohio Department of Education that will provide scholarships to allow the families of students receiving special education services to choose a school that best fits their child's individual needs.

- Creates a five-year pilot program that would provide scholarships to up to 8,000 eligible students (this is based on 3 percent of the total special education population enrolled in Ohio public schools, which was approximately 254,000 students in school year 2005-2006).
- The program is open to students in grade kindergarten through 12 (ages five to 22) who have individual education plans for various special education needs, including speech, learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, severe behavioral, hearing or visual impairment, physical handicaps, autism and traumatic brain injuries.

- Scholarship amounts are based on the amount that the state would have provided for the public education of these students, but is capped at \$20,000.
- Students may enroll in public and private special education programs of their choosing; however, schools must be registered with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and must meet state education standards, as established by the State Board of Education.
- The Ohio Department of Education will be required to conduct a thorough review of the program no later than December 31 of 2013.

SB 7 Fraud Reporting System

Sponsor: Senator Mark Wagoner (R-Lucas County)

Requires the Auditor of State to maintain a system for reporting fraud to provide Ohioans and public employees with ways to anonymously report allegations of fraud, abuse or misuse of taxpayer funds.

- Auditor Taylor has proactively established a fraud hotline (1-866-372-8364), website (www.fraudohio.com) and other tools to report the misuse of public funds. This legislation would codify the service in state law so that it is a permanent accountability measure.
- Requires public entities, both state and local, to provide all new employees with information regarding the Ohio Fraud Reporting system.
- Recognizing that approximately 50 percent of all government fraud is detected by tips to authorities, the bill ensures protections under the Ohio Whistleblower Protection Act for those willing to come forward.

SB 8 Elections Clarifications

Sponsor: Senator Bill Seitz (R-Green Township)

Responds to confusion surrounding the administration of the 2008 General Election by making five clarifying changes to the law.

- Eliminates so-called “Golden Week” – the controversial five-day period in which some voters were permitted to both register and vote on the same day – by constricting the in-person absentee voting period from 35 days to 20 days before the election. In light of the popularity of in-person absentee voting, the bill also seeks to eliminate lines at the polls by permitting local boards of elections to establish up to three locations within their counties where voters can cast their absentee ballots. Current law allows for only one.
- Permits any political party to appoint a qualified elector to act as an observer at in-person absentee voting centers. This is consistent with the law governing the casting and counting of ballots on Election Day and with a recent Supreme Court ruling. At the request of boards of elections, the bill also establishes a code of conduct that observers must follow as to not interfere with voting or counting.
- Clarifies that all five fields – name, address, date of birth, signature and one of the many forms of identification required by state law – must be completed on the absentee ballot identification envelope and requires boards of elections to notify voters that have not completed the envelope so that they have the opportunity to correct the problem and ensure their vote is counted.
- Requires the Secretary of State to create and maintain a statewide voter registration database that is available to boards of elections and that can be cross-checked with other government databases to ensure the information is accurate.
- Preserves bipartisan administration of elections in Ohio by ensuring that should the Secretary of State reject an appointment made by political parties, that political party would have the opportunity to provide another appointment by following the same procedure.

SB 9 Film Tax Credit

Sponsor: Senator Tom Patton (R-Strongsville)

Provides a state tax credit to encourage the production of motion pictures in Ohio and the jobs that come with it.

- Ohio is only one of a few states that do not offer incentives for attracting motion picture productions.
- In an effort to make the state more competitive in this area, the bill would provide a 25 percent, transferrable income tax credit for productions that have a budget of more than \$300,000. The credit would be limited to only the first \$100 million spent on production costs in Ohio.
- The program would be administered by the Ohio Department of Development.

SB 10 Increased Disclosure on Transition Accounts

Sponsor: Senator Chris Widener (R-Springfield)

Regulates non-profit transition corporations that have been established by statewide elected officials in order to raise money for the purpose of covering expenses incurred by their transition teams and related to the inauguration of that elected official.

- The Inspector General's report following his investigation into the operations of Attorney General Marc Dann's office uncovered questionable uses for transition funds and highlighted the fact that they are not regulated under current law.
- Requires such transition accounts to be filed with the Secretary of State and subjects them to limits and reporting requirements consistent with state campaign finance laws.
- The use of transition accounts will be limited to 120 days, after which funds remaining would go would be redistributed to 1) the state treasurer for deposit into the Ohio elections commission fund; 2) individuals who made donations to the account as a refund; or 3) a 501 (a) or (c) charitable corporation.

SJR 1 Veterans Bonus

Sponsor: Senator Tim Grendell (R-Chesterland)

Honors a long-standing Ohio tradition by providing Ohio voters the opportunity to authorize the issuance of \$200 million in state bonds to provide a bonus to honor the service of Ohio veterans.

- Provides a one-time bonus of \$100 for every month of service, up to \$1,000 for veterans of the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts.
- Service personnel that were stationed in other locations during those conflicts would be eligible for bonuses of \$50 per month, up to \$500.
- Provides for a \$5,000 death benefit to be paid to the families of any soldier from these conflicts that has been killed in the line of duty.