

Why 'yes' on Issue 2

By Phillip L. Parker, CAE, CCE
President and CEO

With all the money being spent recently on this upcoming election, most everyone should know there is more at stake than just political offices. Some of the most contentious ballot issues I've ever seen in Ohio are to be determined by your vote on Nov. 8.

But with all the rhetoric from both sides, many folks are still undecided as to why and how we even got here.

First, we can't discuss how we got here unless we start back when Ohio's legislature contemplated its biennium budget for FY 2012-2013 and was in an \$8-billion deficit hole, much like the daunting tasks of California, Illinois, New York and others.

Unless Ohio's legislature wanted to ask citizens for higher taxes, the only other option was the expense side of the budget.

Few argued this daunting task.

Ohio's business community looked at plenty of options, but as part of their review they published some comprehensive guidelines to streamline government, making it more efficient and not recommending higher taxes — especially in our current economic downturn when most Ohio taxpayers wanted fewer taxes and more take-home pay.

"Redesigning Ohio — Transforming Government Into a 21st Century Institution" made 10 important recommendations to help balance Ohio's burgeoning budget while asking elected leaders to prioritize what is most important during this downturn. The formidable answer was jobs, jobs and jobs.

Recognizing these economic concerns were valid, the legislature made certain assumptions in Senate Bill 5, though unpopular with public workers, that would help reign in spending



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in all areas of government, not just locally, but throughout state and local governments and school districts.

Recommendations included:

► Asking public employees to pay at least 15 percent of their health-care premiums when knowing

that private-sector employees average paying 31 percent (if they even have health care at all);

► Changing collective bargaining rules to eliminate public strikes — something that only hurts the public, our children and community image (something fire and police have lived without for some time);

► Paying more of a "fair share" of their pensions when many Ohioans have no pension or retirement at all;

► Basing pay on merit and performance, similar to what the other 85 percent of Ohio workers have; and

► Asking employees for more flexibility in multitasking and for better management oversight versus the old system of "if it's not in my contract, I don't have to do it."

Now for the why.

Issue 2 is supposed to be about sustaining Senate Bill 5 reforms passed by our publicly elected state senators and representatives.

But in reality, it's more about what we can do to sustain good government for Ohio's future.

In fairness to all, this is not the only answer to sustaining efficient, effective and good government in our state. And it's not about saying police, firefighters and teachers are to blame.

Please hear this clearly — they are not the enemy and they are not to blame. It has taken 30 years and the biggest recession since the Great

The reality is we must do something to turn Ohio around, to create a business climate of efficient government with nationally competitive tax rates that will retain and attract more businesses to Ohio — and create more jobs.

Depression to put Ohio — not to mention America — in this position of belt-tightening and re-allocation of resources.

Our state and our economy needs emergency care. Much more of this and we'll be on life support.

I hate this divisiveness in our communities and our state. I hate that local governments, schools and community levies are being punished by this economy.

But the reality is we must do something to turn Ohio around, to create a business climate of efficient government with nationally competitive tax rates that will retain and attract more businesses to Ohio — and create more jobs.

If passed, this reform will save state and local governments more than \$1 billion a year. Short of that, we will continue in this negative economic spiral for years to come.

If we don't pass some government reforms, I predict we will put serious strain on governments to try and pass more and new local income or property tax levies just to keep up basic service levels — or we'll see continued devastating layoffs of teachers, police and firefighters for the foreseeable future.

That's why Issue 2 must pass with a "Yes" vote now, before it gets even worse.

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MONTHLY CHAMBER EVENTS

► **Friday, Nov. 11, 7:15-9 a.m., Breakfast Briefing**, Dayton Racquet Club. Speaker Jeff Slocum, Logistics Center Manager, Caterpillar. Topic: Caterpillar — Making Progress Possible. Member cost \$25, nonmember

cost \$40. RSVP: (937) 226-8253 or registration@dacc.org

► **Wednesday, Nov. 16, 8-9 a.m., Safety Breakfast with the Experts**, The Mandalay Banquet Cen-

ter. Speaker: Mark Ashworth, City of Huber Heights Fire Chief. Topic: Fire Protection Systems in Commercial Buildings. Member cost \$30, non-member cost \$35. RSVP: (937) 226-8227 or abyers@dacc.org