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Teachers hope for repeal of Senate Bill 5

Issue 2 threatens obstruction to teachers rights

Ian Howard | Staff Writer

The outcome of Issue 2 will decide whether the human rights of over 300,000 public workers will be obstructed, according to American Government teacher Maria Mueller. Issue 2 originates from Senate Bill 5, a legislation sponsored by State Senator Shannon Jones which restricts the collective bargaining rights of firefighters, police officers, teachers and other public workers. Mueller said while collective bargaining rights for all members of the private sector remain untouched, if Issue 2 passes, then teachers will not be able to control how many health benefits they receive.

“The legislation interferes with my rights as a person,” Mueller said. “There’s an equal protection issue with my ability to associate with whom I want in the capacity that I want in my profession.”

Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee visited Mason to speak at a “Yes on Issue 2” pancake breakfast on October 14. Huckabee said that Issue 2 is simply the necessary progression of a state in an economic crisis.

“In every state, and in every municipality in this country there is a huge crisis going on in Ohio, an \$8 billion one and that’s got to be made up somewhere,” Huckabee said. “There’s really two ways [to make up for it]. One, raise your taxes, and the second way is to take the same kind of responsible fiscal steps that you have taken in your family over the past couple of years and that every business owner and operator has taken over the past couple of years.”

Regardless of budget saving motives, decreasing the budget for education will bring unwanted gaps to the quality of education, according to Mueller.

“It decreases the budget by diminishing public education,” Mueller said. “You’re not going to have to spend money on education that you’re not providing anymore.”

Art teacher Audrey Gorman said that the legislation of Senate Bill 5 is pragmatically flawed.

“Senate Bill 5 would actually take away our ability to talk openly with the administration (our bosses,) and talk about issues we’re having and ways to solve those problems,” Gorman said. “It would actually take those rights away from both the administration and the teacher’s union, and give them to the state. The state would decide how we would be organized.”

Not only would it dramatically affect the good relationship that the teachers of Mason High School have developed with their administration, but it would solicit a much lesser staff of teachers in coming years, according to Mueller.

“When you reduce the salaries and benefits of any profession you attract a different kind of worker. It’s going to be a different body of people because the realities are the realities people need to make a living,” Mueller said.

Sadly this unpopular bill will probably have no effect



photo contributed

From left to right: Maria Muller, Diana Messer, Elizabeth Imrie and Audrey Gorman participate in a Senate Bill 5 rally on February 22 in Columbus.

at all on how voters pick their state senators in future elections, according to Mueller.

“I don’t think that people one, judge their state legislators by one piece of legislation and two, quite honestly voters have a tendency to vote [with whom] they’re familiar with,” Mueller said. “They tend to vote names that they know and who do you know? The person who’s in office.”

Mueller said that she sees many discrepancies in the governor’s urgency to balance the budget. Governor Kasich’s increase to his, as well as his administration’s salary certainly did not help matters, although they are not significant enough to make a humongous difference, according to Mueller.

“Of course the legislation exempts most of the people who work in Columbus itself, meaning the legislators and the members of the executive branch in the higher levels,” Mueller said. “None of these issues would impact them at all.”

Mueller said that she contends that even if the issue is said no to, the governor will try to set in place these measures through other methods.

“Let’s imagine that the vote is no, and so what used to be called Senate Bill 5 is no longer in existence,” Mueller said. “I don’t think that the legislature will rest on ‘Oh well. We lost.’ I think that they’ll approach their objectives in other means, other ways, other pieces of legislation that maybe aren’t quite as expansive as Senate Bill 5 is. They’ll try to chip away at those same rights.”