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SENATE BILL 5

Taxpayer benefit?

If bill had been in effect in 2010, central Ohio’s biggest public entities would have saved $74 million

By Rob Messinger, Doug Caruso and Jennifer Smith Richards

Central Ohio’s largest government entities would have spent about $74 million less on employees’ health-care and pension benefits last year if Senate Bill 5 had been in effect.

Paying the cost instead of taxpayers would have been workers for central Ohio’s seven county governments, their county seats and the region’s seven largest school districts. In 2010, those 21 employers had about 37,400 workers.

The expense would have been borne by nonunion employees as well as those in organized labor. Anyone working for the state, cities or counties, and public school systems could be affected by the provisions of Senate Bill 5 that limit government spending on health-care plans and pension contributions.

Based on a *Dispatch* analysis, the impact of the bill would be significant for some public employers and insignificant for others. The city of Columbus, for example, would have saved $50 million last year. But Ohio State University, which has a budget and staff that dwarfs the city’s, and Columbus State Community College both would have been untouched.

The Dispatch polled central Ohio’s largest governments about two aspects of the bill that has been passed by the Senate and is now being considered by the House:

• The requirement that all government workers pay at least 15 percent of the cost of their health plans.

• A ban on government agencies paying any portion of the pension costs that are supposed to be employees’ obligation. Employees are supposed to pay 10 percent of their salaries into Ohio’s five public-employee pension plans, although proposals exist to increase some of those requirements.

The newspaper’s analysis found that those two elements would have saved the 21 local governments a total of $74 million, about 1.1 percent of their collective operating budgets that year. Employees would have paid instead.

The pension issue would affect most of the local governments studied, 20 of them. The health-care measure would affect 12.

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