



THE OHIO ARCHAEOLOGICAL COUNCIL  
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Proponent Testimony House Bill 75  
House State Government Committee  
Hon. Ronald V. Gerberry, Chairman

Alan Tonetti, Ohio Archaeological Council  
Trustee and Chair, Government Affairs Committee

November 18, 2009

Chairman Gerberry and distinguished members of the House State Government Committee, I am Alan Tonetti, a trustee of the Ohio Archaeological Council and chair of the Council's Government Affairs Committee. The Council is a private, non-profit, charitable, scientific, and educational membership organization incorporated with the state of Ohio in 1975. Our mission is to promote the advancement of archaeology in Ohio through research, preservation, education, and consultation with government agencies and the public. Our members include professional archaeologists throughout Ohio working in the private, for-profit sector, in private non-profit museums and preservation organizations, in state and federal government agencies, and in academia.

The Ohio Archaeological Council strongly supports HB 75. Its enactment will enable historical and preservation organizations throughout the state to obtain badly needed funds from voluntary contributions to support education and preservation programs and activities, funds that are otherwise extremely difficult to obtain, particularly in these difficult economic times. In addition, HB 75 will allow the Ohio Historical Society to meet one of the recommendations contained in the 2002 report from the House Select Committee Studying the Effectiveness of Ohio's Historical Programs and Partnerships, before which I testified on two occasions on behalf of the Ohio Archaeological Council. The recommendation referred to is for the state to "consider special mechanisms that would help supplement General Revenue Fund appropriations for historical programming and preservation in Ohio. Examples could include [an] individual taxpayer check off to a History fund."

As you know, in recent years the General Assembly has severely cut the Ohio Historical Society's budget. The Society adapted to this reduction in a number of ways, including seeking greater private support, eliminating positions and salary increases, and reducing public access to resources, including historical sites, its library, and the State Archives. These reductions severely damaged the Society's ability to promote and enhance Ohio's archaeology and history, and had a negative impact on Ohio's economy and its reputation among the nation's archaeological and historical community.

While these cuts effectively tied one of the Society's hands behind its back, you have the opportunity to loosen the knot. Passing HB 75 will enable the Society to accept voluntary contributions to help historical and preservation organizations throughout Ohio promote Ohio's archaeology and history in ways that the Society cannot do.

The grant program the Society has pledged to create and administer with funds from the income tax check-off will not only promote and enhance Ohio's archaeology and history, it will enhance Ohio's reputation and economy, and increase educational opportunities for students. The success of the Ohio Department of Natural Resource's income tax check-offs is well known. In 25 years, over \$25 million in contributions have been donated. In 2006, just before the economy faltered, approximately 80,000 Ohioans contributed more than \$800,000, an average of only \$10 per contribution.

More than 400,000 Ohioans belong to some type of historical or preservation organization, of which there are hundreds, at least one of which is in each of your districts. An income tax check-off supporting Ohio history and preservation programs will voluntarily raise hundreds of thousands of dollars each year for urgently needed programs and activities promoting one of Ohio's greatest cultural and economic assets, its history. This asset requires re-investment. It has been neglected for far too long. The Ohio Archaeological Council urges this committee to give the Ohio Historical Society the means to enhance Ohioan's ability to promote and preserve our history, educate our students, and boost our economy by voting for HB 75.

Thank you.