



State Representatives Jack Cera & Brian Hill

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Lawmakers reach across aisle to boost neglected eastern Ohio communities *Bipartisan legislation would assist areas impacted by shale drilling*

COLUMBUS— State Reps. Jack Cera (D-Bellaire) and Brian Hill (R-Zanesville) have partnered together to ensure that communities in the shale area of the state benefit from the recent increase in oil and gas drilling. The lawmakers today provided sponsor testimony in the House Ways and Means Committee on House Bill 105, their bipartisan legislation to reinvest severance tax revenue in Eastern Ohio.

“The shale area of our state has been ignored long enough. It’s time for Columbus to wake up and do the right thing by investing in the eastern Ohio communities most impacted by oil and natural gas activity,” said Cera. “This legislation helps create a positive environment for the industry to grow, while at the same time assisting local governments and communities with repairs to roadways and bridges.”

While the state appropriates roughly \$14 million for regulating the oil and gas industry, the existing severance tax currently generates over twice that amount. HB 105 will direct severance tax revenue in excess of \$18 million to various programs and services in the shale region, including funds for road repair and other infrastructure needs; increased local government funds; a grant program for firefighter and EMT equipment; and a grant program for local governments and school districts to help convert their vehicles to compressed natural gas (CNG).

The bill also requires the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to develop a well-plugging program for known and suspected idle and orphaned wells.

“House Bill 105 bill takes any funds above and beyond what the Orphan Well program needs to operate, and returns those existing severance tax dollars back to the communities where the oil and gas industries operate” said Hill. “Eastern Ohio is in dire need of infrastructure repairs, and this bill would help those communities make infrastructure improvements without imposing any new taxes on the oil and gas industry.”

House Bill 105 will continue to be considered in the House Ways and Means Committee.