



**State Representative
Jack Cera**

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State raids severance tax fund to pay off unrelated Grand Lake St. Marys lawsuit settlement

Cera objects to \$15 M state budget cash-grab from impacted Eastern Ohio communities

COLUMBUS— Over objections from state Controlling Board member Rep. Jack Cera (D-Bellaire), the Republican-controlled panel tasked with oversight of state spending approved a Kasich Administration request today to pay off a Grand Lake St. Marys landowners’ lawsuit against the state using severance tax revenue from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources oil & gas fund. Republicans slipped the maneuver into the state budget at the eleventh hour with no debate or notice.

“Lawmakers should be held accountable for resorting to one-time cash-grabs and shell games to prop up unstable budgets and poor job growth,” Cera said. “This sheds new light on the dangerous and dishonest financial tricks lawmakers will play to bolster political talking points. This funding should be used to put people back to work in Eastern Ohio at good-paying jobs that can sustain a family and let us plan for our future.”

The cash-grab to pay off the almost decade-old lawsuit makes use of some \$15 million in severance tax funds that are normally required to be used for related oil and gas drilling needs in impacted communities. Republicans state lawmakers already transferred \$10 million from the fund to prop up the state budget shortfall early in June.

“This multi-million-dollar cash grab by the state shows where Columbus politicians’ priorities are – not with hardworking taxpayers and property owners in Eastern Ohio,” Cera added. “After almost ten years to plan for a lawsuit settlement in the western part of Ohio, state officials failed to responsibly plan for the future and instead are robbing our area of what’s rightfully ours.”

The settlement comes on the heels of the state budget vote. Cera tried to amend the budget to dedicate at least \$10 million in severance tax money for infrastructure repairs and related services in Eastern Ohio communities. His efforts were defeated along party lines.

Cera, the lead Democrat on the House budget committee, has been an outspoken on the need to return severance tax revenue to local communities in Eastern Ohio for job training, safety and infrastructure improvements and economic development.

