



SENATE WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE

Opponent Testimony on SB 252

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Ways & Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this morning regarding **Senate Bill 252**. My name is Micah Derry, and I am the State Director for Americans for Prosperity – Ohio. On behalf of our tens of thousands of activists across the Buckeye State, I urge you to oppose **Senate Bill 252**, which would worsen an already perverse set of incentives for politicians to raise taxes to reward special interests by allowing them to hold dual positions in government and visitors’ bureaus.

Under current law, there is very little to prevent local officials like county commissioners, who levy taxes on hotels, from serving on the boards of the visitors’ bureaus that receive those tax dollars. Once on the board of a visitors’ bureau, these elected officials are able to spend these tax dollars with little transparency, because these entities are under no obligation to report their spending to the public or respond to open records requests. This enables them to use the visitors’ bureau as a slush fund to spend taxpayer dollars at their discretion. By taking over visitors’ bureaus and gaining this ability to spend money without accountability, these local politicians can then direct potentially vast sums of taxpayer money to their political allies and private business interests, skewing the economic playing field and incentivizing corruption and cronyism.

**Senate Bill 252** does nothing to address this problem. Instead, it protects it as a legal right. I urge you to oppose this bill unless it is altered significantly, and to work toward a legislative solution to the nexus of cronyism and unaccountable spending that is enabled by our visitors’ bureaus.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for permitting me to share my testimony with the committee. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.

*Americans for Prosperity (AFP) exists to recruit, educate, and mobilize citizens in support of the policies and goals of a free society at the local, state, and federal level, helping every American live their dream – especially the least fortunate. AFP has more than 3.2 million activists across the nation, a local infrastructure that includes 36 state*

*chapters, and has received financial support from more than 100,000 Americans in all 50 states. For more information, visit [www.AmericansForProsperity.org](http://www.AmericansForProsperity.org).*