

Dear Members of the Ohio State House of Representatives,

My name is Jon Elsasser, and I am a resident of Zoar, Ohio. I spent 31 years at The Timken Company, serving in various leadership roles, including President of our sales and manufacturing business unit in Brazil, Group Vice President overseeing a workforce of more than 3,000 across Europe, Asia, and Africa, and finally as Chief Information Officer, where I was responsible for global information technology and corporate shared services. Since retiring, I have shared my expertise as an educator, teaching strategic management, information technology, and international business at Ashland and Malone universities.

Beyond my professional career, I am deeply engaged in preserving Ohio's history. I serve as a board member of the Ohio History Connection, where I have chaired the finance and governance committees, and I am the President of the Zoar Community Association. In this role, I help oversee the operations of both Historic Zoar Village and Fort Laurens State Memorial. Though I serve as an unpaid volunteer, I dedicate approximately 15 hours per week to this work and have a comprehensive understanding of the financial and operational challenges these historic sites face.

I respectfully urge you to approve a budget allocation of at least \$11,721,000 for Ohio History Connection's line 360501, as proposed by the Governor in the As-Introduced version of the budget. This funding is critical to the sustainability of Ohio's historic sites, including one of the largest outside of Central Ohio—Historic Zoar Village. Adequate funding will enable much-needed maintenance on state-owned buildings and improve compensation and benefits for our dedicated local staff. Current funding levels leave buildings in a state of disrepair and force us to hire employees without access to essential medical or retirement benefits. This reality makes it challenging to attract and retain the most qualified candidates, which in turn affects site operations and increases reliance on volunteers—like myself—who are increasingly difficult to find.

While I am deeply committed to my volunteer role, at age 71, I hope to see a future where sites like Zoar can thrive with a sustainable staffing model, rather than relying on the rare individual with the necessary time and expertise to fill critical gaps.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,
Jon Elsasser
Zoar, Ohio