

Stephen Magda  
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RE: OPPOSING AM1361x1 in HB 292

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Ways & Means Committee, I would like to give a testimony opposing the Amendment to HB 292, "Property Tax Exemption for Olympic Training Facilities. This amendment was spearheaded by a lobbying group hired by the private owner of a local Olympic Center located in Harpersfield, Ohio and House Representative John Patterson. My name is Stephen R. Magda and I represent 120 concerned citizens of Ashtabula County who oppose this amendment for various reasons. This Complex is a pet pilot project for economic development in an area that has been distressed for a number of years. The facility has been under non-profit protection but operates certain functions as a for profit business. The past ten years the owner of said complex has found ways to delay his obligations to the tax payers in the amount of 6 million dollars including interest and penalties fees. Through various initiatives from filing charitable status which was denied from both the tax committee and the Supreme Court of Ohio and now if this amendment passes into law it will allow local County Commissioners and the local School Board the authorities to negotiate an agreement with said center pertaining to real estate tax responsibilities, as well as extending the payment deadline in which a delinquent tax is paid from 5-10 years. I would like to mention that there is legislation already in place which handles delinquent tax violations, through elected departments, (Auditor and Treasurer) this agreement if passed will eliminate this process and hand it over to two entities of government without any checks and balances, one being the local School Board which has no authority to negotiate County taxes. This amendment would be creating a separation from the local citizens and placing a government for the people by the people into the hands of a private/public partnership which has no regards for a transparent government. We must look at all aspect of private involvement including who owns and operates the entity involved. When it comes to the Sports complex in question the owner shows no regards to community involvement, he manipulated our local officials from the School Board to local municipal representatives with false hope, the owners vision presented to our local officials have been falling short for the past ten years, the facility failed in its vision to increase growth in the area. The owner made numerous promise only to remain unfulfilled. One in particular was to pay the local district \$400,000.00 annually for the first five years, but the deal never made it past the first quarter of operations. I would like to ask this committee to look into the owner and how much he has really contributed to our community before allowing him the opportunity to manipulate the local officials to give him the run of our County in the name of Economic prosperity that does not happen, only for him. I ask that if this amendment is considered that a clause be implemented allowing the citizens of the County in which these facilities are located have the opportunity to vote on the final decision allowing or denying the said agreement. Thank you for the opportunity in allowing me to give this testimony as there must be two sides given before a sound decision can be made allowing or denying this amendment into State Law. Please feel free to contact me with questions or requesting copies of signatures from 120 concerned citizens. Also I would like to mention that our County relies on every tax payer performing the duty for tax revenue to the operation of government and the owner of Spire Institute should be held in the same level, our County can use the 6 million dollars he owes in unpaid taxes. Thank you again Stephen R. Magda, Ashtabula County