



## OHIO PARKS AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION

1069-A West Main Street • Westerville, Ohio 43081-1181

614-895-2222 • 614-895-3050 fax • [www.opraonline.org](http://www.opraonline.org) • [opra@opraonline.org](mailto:opra@opraonline.org)

Written Testimony on Substitute House Bill 49

Woody Woodward, Executive Director

April 27, 2017

### Board of Directors

**Ed Merritt, CPRP**

President  
Grove City Parks and Recreation

**Sarah Arold, CPRP**

Conference  
Strongsville Parks,  
Recreation & Senior Services

**Amy Bowman Moore**

Communications  
Erie MetroParks

**Bob Fonte**

Advocacy & Vice President  
Stark County Park District

**Tiphanie Howard, CPRP**

Membership  
Blue Ash Parks & Recreation

**Kristen Marks, CPRP**

Education  
Centerville-Washington Park District

**Alan McKnight**

Partnership Development

**J. Scott Myers**

Organizational Development  
Miami County Park District

**William Tschirhart, CPRP**

Treasurer  
Five Rivers MetroParks

**James Snider**

Corporate Ex-Officio  
Snider Recreation, Inc.

**Woody Woodward**

Executive Director

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am Woody Woodward Executive Director of the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association. We represent nearly 1,700 parks and recreation professionals around the state.

I write to express the strong concern of our membership regarding two elements of the substitute version of the budget bill.

The first concern is the amendment which gives expanded management authority to county probate judges on matters which involve 1545 (metropolitan) park districts.

As you know, probate judges appoint the members of 1545 park district boards. Providing the judge with the authority to investigate, subpoena and levy court costs against that board for virtually any management decision seems a prescription for micromanagement of the park district. We are unaware of even one instance in Ohio where this type of broad investigatory overreach would have been called for. While we are aware of a recent decision by the Ohio Supreme Court on this issue, we firmly believe that this amendment goes far beyond that court decision.

For nearly 100 years, Ohio park districts have been among the best in the nation. Making changes to the system—including proposals which would change the appointing authority for park commissioners—appears to us to be a solution in search of a problem.

To address this concern, we propose the following amendment to the substitute bill. **“Delete lines 22988 through 23048,”**

Second, we note that the bill includes a provision regarding oil and gas pooling. While the bill exempts state parks and nature preserves from the provision, we strongly believe that metropolitan park districts should be exempt as well. Many of the state’s most valuable natural resources are contained within the boundaries of metropolitan park districts.

To address this concern, we propose the following amendment to the substitute bill. **“At line 20671, after the word ‘Code’, insert ‘or a metropolitan park district that is created under Chapter 1545 of the Revised Code.’”**

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me if we can answer any questions.

*Woody Woodward*

**Educate • Advocate • Collaborate**