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November 3, 2009

Dear Editor:

People in Ohio are hungry. Hundreds of thousands do not always have food in the house. Many are homeless and a far larger number live in overcrowded or unsafe living conditions. Many lack safe water or cannot pay for heat. They lack money for personal hygiene products. Beyond the immediate demands for basic human needs, many do without physical, emotional or behavioral healthcare. These problems have always been with us, but today they have greatly expanded due to the recession.

However, more important is the unwillingness of the political leadership in Ohio to seriously address these problems. If there was ever a time to ask those who are financially able to share with those who are struggling, now is the time. To date, the Governor and General Assembly seem far more worried about protecting the tax cuts for the well off than they do about meeting even the most basic needs of the poorest among us.

H.B. 308 would raise taxes on those making over \$200,000 a year. This represents about the top 2%, about 145,000, of taxpayers. On the other end of the scale are the 1.2 million Ohio taxpayers with annual incomes of less than \$10,000 a year. Many of them are elderly, disabled or families on welfare. They are often living on grossly inadequate benefits set by their government.

It is not because we do not have the money to do better. For years, Ohio sat on an \$800 million balance of unspent welfare block grant funds while refusing to significantly increase benefits to poor families. Ohio did, however, take \$100 million of those funds to replace state funding for an early childhood program. Those freed up state dollars helped pay for the 20% tax cut for everyone else.

With such monumental need on one hand and so much comfort on the other, why do the Governor and the General Assembly feel so strongly about protecting the interests of those already safe? Many of these 145,000 taxpayers already voluntarily contribute far more to charitable causes than what is being asked here. Even after the proposed tax increase is initiated, the average top end 145,000 households will still have a minimum of 20 times more annual income than each of the 1.2 million poorest households at the bottom.

Congress bailed out the banks and insurance companies with \$700 billion of borrowed taxpayer money. By comparison, the total annual appropriation for the family welfare block grant is only \$16 billion for the entire nation. Each of the 160,000 poorest children in Ohio struggling to get by on very meager welfare benefits will have the same debt burden as the children whose families benefited far more greatly from the corporate bailout.

Representatives Foley, Hagen and their handful of cosponsors of H.B. 308 deserve our respect and support. It is time for the political leadership in Ohio to start looking out for those most in need.

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