



Opposition to Ohio SB 117

June 7, 2023

The AAUP-OSU board vehemently opposes [SB 117](#), companion legislation to SB 83 and HB151, which seeks to take control of Ohio Higher Education and abolish our established shared governance structures in curriculum development and hiring. SB117 is the latest in a series of legislative efforts to solve a problem that doesn't exist at Ohio's Universities. Specifically, it proposes to initiate and fund the Salman P. Chase Center for Civics, Culture and Society at OSU and the Institute of American Constitutional Thought and Leadership at the University of Toledo College of Law. According to Senators Jerry Cirino and Rob McColley, cosponsors of the legislation, the Chase Center will allow students and their families to pursue an education full of rigorous civic debate and will address the low level of citizenship knowledge among the general public. It will do this by offering a conservative ideological alternative to what Cirino and McColley describe as the single ideological perspective dominating academia: liberalism. The senators are asking for \$13 million of taxpayer money over two years, with the bulk of that funding going to establish the Chase Center at OSU.

We oppose this legislation for the following reasons:¹

- Lack of Fit. The proposed center departs from best practice to develop new centers and institutes at the initiative of faculty, staff, students and administrators in alignment with the university's and/or sponsoring college's strategic plan. Senators Cirino and McColley have not demonstrated that a constituency exists at the university to sustain this Center after a substantial initial investment of taxpayer dollars.
- Duplication. Ohio State University currently has over 70 centers and institutes, many of which have comparable, *nonpartisan* programs to engage diverse perspectives on matters of citizenship. Among these, we specifically cite IDEA, the Institute for Democratic Engagement and Accountability, CEHV, the Center for Ethics and Human Values, and the Mershon Center for International Security Studies.

¹ Many thanks to Christopher Nichols and Richard Fletcher for compiling these points and offering oral and written opposition to the bill on May 31, 2023.

- **Imposition.** The legislation violates OSU Faculty Rules, which state that “neither university nor college centers may establish independent course offerings and degree programs.” The proposed center would give its director the power to “develop the center’s curriculum.” It states that the center “shall be granted the authority to offer courses and develop certificate, minor, and major programs as well as graduate programs.” In short, the proposed center would behave more like a department than a center.
- **Lack of Accountability.** The legislation violates established hiring processes at the university which require departmentally-based faculty to propose and approve all faculty hires in their units with administration support. The legislation gives the proposed center’s director the power to unilaterally “hire all faculty and staff,” described as “not fewer than fifteen tenure-track faculty to teach under the center.” Further, it mandates that these hires come with a “guarantee of reappointment elsewhere in the university,” thus subverting the university’s established methods of insuring the academic competence of its faculty.
- **Likelihood of Failure.** The legislation provides funding only for the first two years. We contend that without a pre-existing, on campus, engaged constituency, this externally imposed center will not be able to sustain itself, once established.
- **Outsider Influence.** The legislation is part of a coordinated, well-funded national movement spearheaded by the Koch Donor Network to reinstall white cultural hegemony and turn back fifty years of civil rights and social justice reforms. The language of the bill is based on Model Legislation of the Civics Alliance, developed by the National Association of Scholars (NAS). The model legislation aims to develop and oversee a mandated American history and government class (already included in SB 83) and a core curriculum that would prioritize “Western Civilization, British Literature, and Greek Philosophy,” eliminating the study of what these scholars call “sub-groups of Americans.”

Executive Board, AAUP-OSU