



December 21, 2014

Editorial: A Job Well Done

Kasich's first term brought remarkable improvement

With last month's election a fading memory and the legislature adjourned for the year, Ohio looks to be in a short political lull for the holidays. It's a good time to consider how far the state has come in the past four years under the leadership of Gov. John Kasich, who will begin his second term in January.

Even more so than most governors, Kasich had his work cut out for him from Day One. Welcomed by a lingering, deep economic downturn and an \$8 billion budget shortfall, Kasich quickly rolled up his sleeves. He plugged the budget hole and restored the state's rainy-day fund, which then contained \$1.78. Within two years, that figure was \$482 million.

He has created a climate and a streamlined economic-development approach that has helped gain back thousands of the 400,000 jobs that were lost under his predecessor, Ted Strickland. At the same time, and also with an eye to encouraging a stronger economy, Kasich got rid of the estate tax and cut income taxes. These tax moves were a particular boon to small businesses, which create the majority of new private-sector jobs in America.

Kasich can't be accused of favoring the wealthy over the needy; he has time and again proved himself to be both compassionate and pragmatic in his approach. At the same time he was helping middle-class business people keep more of their money and create jobs, he was backing programs to aid former convicts in their re-entry into the community, where they often struggle to find jobs and avoid recidivism.

Defying pressure from conservative ideologues, Kasich expanded Medicaid coverage in Ohio, saying he felt it was a moral obligation to see that the poor have access to health care. He also has directed additional state resources to fight Ohio's relatively high infant-mortality rate — which disproportionately affects the poor — and to provide immediate care to poor pregnant women, in a bid to forestall problems that occur when babies are born prematurely, underweight or drug-dependent.

In fact, Kasich's innovative Office of Health Transformation, headed by Greg Moody, has worked tirelessly to find innovative ways to help keep poor and lower-income Ohioans healthy. Like most of his decisions, this came out of Kasich's sense that it was the right thing to do and also the sensible thing: If Ohioans are healthier, they are less likely to require more costly care down the road and more likely to be contributing members of the community and the economy.

One major change that Moody's office was involved with was redirecting money from nursing homes, which have had an extremely powerful lobbying presence at the Ohio Statehouse for years, to home-based care. That care is more cost-effective and more popular with seniors and their families. In his second term, ensuring the quality of that care should be a priority.

Kasich doesn't plan to slow down after winning re-election in a landslide. He will continue efforts to increase Ohio's severance taxes on oil and gas drillers, reduce income taxes for all Ohioans and reform the state's deeply flawed charter-school law.

It's been a very busy four years for Kasich and a good four years for Ohioans, whose prospects are immeasurably better today than they were when he stepped into office. May his next four be as successful and beneficial for the state.

READ EDITORIAL HERE: www.dispatch.com/content/stories/editorials/2014/12/21/01-a-job-well-done.html

###