



State Representatives Jeff McClain and Brian Hill
H.B. 326 Sponsor Testimony
September 21, 2011

Chairman Slaby, Vice Chairman Hayes, Ranking Member Winburn, and ladies and gentlemen of the Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on House Bill 326.

The need for this bill is clear. There is uneven treatment in the section of law dealing with campaign finance. This bill will close that loophole and better protect taxpayer dollars, while providing consistent personal accountability.

The background, in 2007, the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority, or TARTA, was in the midst of a levy campaign. They formed a political action committee -- Citizens for TARTA -- to raise resources to fund the campaign. And then, although they are prohibited as a political subdivision from loaning money to a campaign committee, TARTA loaned Citizens for TARTA \$66,885 in years 2007 and 2008. At the time the loans were made, the general manager of TARTA also served as the deputy treasurer of Citizens for TARTA.

Under the Ohio Revised Code Section 9.03, governing bodies of a political subdivision are prohibited from using public funds to support or oppose candidates or levy campaigns. But, unlike other campaign finance violations, there is not a criminal penalty for government officers who knowingly violate this prohibition. This bill will change that -- the penalty would be a misdemeanor of the first degree -- the same as many other violations of campaign finance laws. House Bill 326 will protect taxpayers' dollars, making certain that these monies provide government services, not serve political interests.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify here today, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have on this legislation.