
Government Relations & Ethics

The Ohio Society of Professional Engineers is the single, most powerful voice representing Ohio's professional engineers ...

How do we protect the public and our professional engineers from poorly crafted legislation that could erode Ohio's strong engineering licensure tradition?

It's a simple formula: our expert government relations staff works with our members to tell our story at the Ohio Statehouse. Legislators and their staff need to know what you think, and they need your expertise. If you don't tell them, no one else will.

Getting involved in advocating to your legislators is one of the most important things you can do to protect the engineering profession in Ohio.

OSPE offers publications and expert, personal guidance to our members that help them learn how to work with state and federal legislators and agency staff.

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OSPE's "Giving Testimony at the Ohio Statehouse" reviews the formal process of testifying on legislation, including protocol rules and tips for making your message more powerful.

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"Do's and Dont's of Lobbying Your Legislators" describes how you can create effective and beneficial relationships with your local legislators.

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Want to create an effective meeting between your local legislators and chapter members? Consider hosting a Backyard BBQ. OSPE's government relations experts tell you how.

OSPE is at work defending your PE license!

Video Reports

- Five legislative advocacy tips for Ohio PEs (Aug. 22, 2016)
- OSPE reports the Republican Caucus appointments from Ohio House Session (Aug. 2, 2016)

Read recent news from 2015-2016:

OSPE's Political Action Committee endorses three Ohio legislators

The Ohio Society of Professional Engineers' Political Action Committee (OSPE-PAC) has endorsed, to date, three Ohio legislators, including State Representative Louis W. Blessing, III, PE (R-Colerain), an OSPE member, State Representative Al Landis (R-Dover), and State Senator Joe Schiavoni (D-Boardman). Members of OSPE-PAC felt these legislators have been doing a good job helping Ohio's PEs safe-guard the public health, safety and welfare.

Representatives Blessing and Landis have jointly sponsored two key engineering bills -- Ohio House Bill 17 (volunteer immunity for engineers) and Ohio House Bill 236 (ethics education for engineers). OSPE supports both initiatives. While House Bill 17 is law as of May 17, House Bill 236 has passed the Ohio House and it is now in committee hearings in the Ohio Senate.

Senator Schiavoni, the minority leader, is the sponsor of Senate Joint Resolution 3 (infrastructure bonds). OSPE also supports the bond issue proposal to upgrade water and sewer systems.

OSPE-PAC is also considering a number of other nominees for endorsement. OSPE-PAC members are encouraged to identify legislators who share the ideals of the Society in protecting the public through sound engineering policy.

NSPE & OSPE maps highlight threats & legislative victories around the nation

In an effort to keep members aware of threats to professional licensure around the country, the National Society of Professional Engineers has released an interactive map showcasing current threats and legislative victories. Bookmark the linked interactive map so that you may keep up-to-date.

Similarly, over the winter, the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers released its "legislative accomplishments" brochure, which you may download [here](#). This brochure highlights the Society's victories in Ohio and across the nation.

State Representative Al Landis is named OSPE's Legislator of the Year

OSPE President Dennis Irwin, Ph.D., PE, F.NSPE, presented State Representative Al Landis (R-Dover) with the 2016 Legislator of the Year Award at the OSPE Spring CPD Conference in Cleveland, Friday, June 3. Representative Landis is a joint sponsor of Ohio House Bill 17 (volunteer immunity) and House Bill 236 (ethics education for engineers).

Ohio offers one of the most inexpensive PE license renewals in the country!

Once again, at \$40 for a biennial renewal, Ohio offers one of the least expensive PE license renewals in the nation. Only Missouri is less expensive at \$35 for a biennial renewal.

While Mississippi (\$35) and Texas (\$40) also come in low, those states' fees cover annual renewals.

Use this [link](#) to look up your license renewal fees, state-by-state.

It was another busy year for OSPE's L&GA Committee

by Joseph V. Warino, P.E., P.S., F.NSPE, OSPE Vice President of Legislative & Government Affairs

The 2015-2016 year was very active for the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers' Legislative and Government Affairs (L&GA) Committee. Five bills we have been monitoring have been signed by Governor John Kasich.

I am happy to report that House Bill 17 (volunteer immunity) finally became law on May 17, 2016. This legislation provides civil immunity for engineers, surveyors, architects, contractors and tradespersons providing volunteer services during a declared emergency. OSPE has been tracking and supporting this legislation – which was jointly sponsored by State Representative Louis W. Blessing, III, PE, (R-Colerain) and State Representative Al Landis (R-Dover) – for the past three years. The L&GA Committee submitted testimony in favor of House Bill 17 on behalf of OSPE's membership.

House Bill 236, which would require professional engineers to complete continuing professional development hours in professional ethics or rules relevant to practice, is also making progress. It has passed the Ohio House of Representatives and it has had two hearings in the Ohio Senate Transportation, Commerce and Labor Committee. Our members Dave Pritchard, PE, and Bill Lhota, PE, delivered OSPE's testimony in support of this legislation.

OSPE strongly opposes House Bill 214, which attempts to take the selection of piping materials away from the most qualified decision maker, the professional engineer. OSPE member Andy Stone, PE, delivered our opposition testimony to the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee on May 24. Andy is the city engineer for Athens, Ohio.

Unfortunately, House Bill 114 (school barricades) and House Bill 56 (criminal records) were also signed into law. The provisions of House Bill 114 were included in the budget bill. House Bill 56 – to limit the use of criminal records in the hiring and employment practices of public employees – was signed by Governor John Kasich in December 2015. The L&GA Committee submitted testimony in opposition to this bill, which basically prohibits a public employer from including on any employment application form any question concerning an applicant's criminal background.

At present, there are 19 active bills that have some effect on the practice of engineering that are being tracked by the Legislative and Government Affairs Committee and the staff of the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers, your legislative watchdog for the engineering profession.

I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to the many OSPE members who have offered input and technical guidance with reference to the numerous bills and topics covered in 2015-2016. I look forward to your continued support and guidance in the coming year.

Ohio leads the nation in reducing lead in drinking water

On June 9, Governor John Kasich signed into law House Bill 512, which will reduce lead contamination in drinking water from public water supplies across the state of Ohio.

OSPE member Alan Olson, PE, F.NSPE, a past president of the Society and a past chairman of the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Surveyors, reports that the law closes several large gaps in the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. The Ohio law requires more frequent and extensive testing for lead in drinking water, along with greatly reduced testing time and reporting of results to the water supply owner, the public and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The law also requires public water supply system owners to map potential sources of lead contamination, including lead service lines, and fittings and fixtures (such as drinking fountains) that may contain lead in solder or brass. In addition, the Ohio EPA can require a review if there is a significant change in the source of drinking water or water treatment chemicals. The Agency will make loan money available for mapping and replacing lead service lines, for corrosion control studies and implementation of corrosion control, for treating unregulated contaminants identified by the U.S. EPA, and for other purposes, under the 2017 Drinking Water Assistance Fund Program Management Plan.

A chemical engineer, Olson provided input to the Ohio EPA and proponent testimony to the Ohio House and Senate regarding several provisions of the bill.

According to Olson, who has previous experience at NSF International and who is now the president of Westlake Science & Technology, the Safe Drinking Water Act has several gaps that need to be revised because our knowledge of the adverse effects of lead on health—especially infants and children—has changed since some of the federal regulations on lead and copper contamination in drinking water (the “Lead and Copper Rule”) became effective in 1991. For instance, reporting lead levels in water from consumers’ taps is allowed to take six months or longer. The SDWA and the Lead and Copper Rule do not require sampling drinking water at schools or day care centers. Water chemistry, including addition of disinfection and corrosion control chemicals, has not changed over the years, but formal review of changes in drinking water sources and treatment chemicals has not been a priority.

“Ohio could not wait for the federal government to update the Safe Drinking Water Act, or the Lead and Copper Rule with respect to lead contamination in our drinking water,” said Olson, a resident of Westlake. “I applaud the Legislature for enacting House Bill 512, and Governor Kasich for signing it into law. I look forward to the Ohio EPA promulgating regulations under the new law, which will make Ohio the nation’s leader in drinking water.”

Part of Olson’s testimony to the 131st Ohio General Assembly states:

Regarding testing, Ohio EPA should be given authority to require testing for lead on a more frequent basis than every three years. Considerations for testing frequency include age of the water supply system, age of housing and variability in the drinking water source. Very old homes may have lead service lines, the small diameter pipes from the mains in the street to the house. Homes built before 1990 may have lead solder for joining copper tubing, or relatively high lead in brass fittings and fixtures. Rivers can have varying levels of contaminants that can require ongoing changes to drinking water treatment chemicals in order to achieve disinfection and corrosion control targets. Testing for lead is straightforward, well established, and accurate. Good, certified labs are not going to have false positives (erroneous high readings) or false negatives (erroneous low readings). Requiring testing labs run the samples within 30 days of receipt of the sample, and then to report results to water system operators and the Ohio EPA the next business day after completing the analysis, is completely reasonable. Requiring system operators to inform residents who furnished samples within two business days thereafter is also completely reasonable. It is sensible for Ohio EPA to require additional samples in order to supplement the small number of samples typically submitted for testing.

Most important, informing the public of high lead levels needs to be quick, but also put into perspective. Perspective should include whether current readings are an excursion or closer to the historic baseline, an explanation of instant and longer term lead mitigation strategies, and a realistic assessment of potential adverse health effects. If there is testing for blood lead levels, the results need to be in perspective regarding cause and effect.

Giving priority to schools and day care centers for identification of sources of lead in drinking water is paramount. Of all sensitive populations, young children are most susceptible for adverse effects linked to lead exposure. Setting up funding mechanisms to support replacement of lead sources in schools and day care centers, along with lead service lines, is sound policy. Making funding available to operators for upgrading drinking water treatment is important for building and

maintaining our drinking water infrastructure long term.

Requiring Ohio EPA to review changes to drinking water sources, and to conduct appropriate testing, should be made mandatory in order to ensure a safe transition to an alternative or blended source.

The Ohio Society of Professional Engineers stands against piping materials bill in Ohio House committee hearing today

OSPE members, remain vigilant

The government relations team of the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) is proud to take this opportunity to publicly thank our member, Andrew Stone, P.E., for his testimony today on Ohio House Bill 214, piping materials.

Mr. Stone, city engineer and director of public works for the City of Athens, Ohio, eloquently explained OSPE's opposition to this legislation:

"My testimony -- on behalf of the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers -- draws from my experience as the City Engineer in Athens. House Bill 214 attempts to take the selection of piping materials away from the most qualified decision maker, the professional engineer. We oppose House Bill 214 and its attempt to prohibit local communities and professional engineers from making the best decisions to protect the public."

Mr. Stone also fielded a number of tough questions from the members of the Ohio House Energy & Natural Resources Committee.

In addition to Mr. Stone's oral testimony, written opposition testimony was supplied by OSPE Vice President of Legislative & Government Affairs Joe Warino, PE, PS, F.NSPE:

"... the OSPE Board accepted the recommendation of the Legislative and Government Affairs Committee and approved by unanimous vote a motion to oppose House Bill 214."

Furthermore, the National Society of Professional Engineers also commented on the issue through correspondence to the Ohio House Energy & Natural Resources Committee. NSPE President Timothy R. Austin, PE, F.NSPE, wrote:

"On behalf of the more than 31,000 members of the National Society of Professional Engineers ... I am contacting you today to oppose Ohio House Bill 214"

While a host of opposition participated in today's hearing, OSPE members, please be aware ...

This is not over. Around the country, there are efforts being made to pass piping materials legislation similar to Ohio House Bill 214. In Ohio, watch for a renewed fight in "lame duck" and/or for the provisions of House Bill 214 to be added as an amendment to another vehicle in the Ohio House or the Ohio Senate. Please do not hesitate to let your legislators know why you are opposed to House Bill 214. If you need contacts, talking points or other resources, please call your OSPE government relations team -- 614-223-1144 -- or email us at ospe@ohioengineer.com.

Governor Kasich approves civil immunity for engineers volunteering services in a declared emergency

Ohio Governor John Kasich has signed Ohio House Bill 17, which will provide civil immunity for engineers, surveyors, architects, contractors and tradespersons providing volunteer services during a declared emergency. The measure will be effective 90 days after the February 14 bill-signing.

This legislation – cosponsored by State Representative Louis W. Blessing, III, PE, (R-Colerain) and State Representative Al Landis (R-Dover) – was supported by the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers.

In proponent testimony to committees of the Ohio House of Representatives and the Ohio Senate, OSPE explained that "House Bill 17 would place in Ohio law a 'Good Samaritan' provision to protect engineers, surveyors, architects, tradespersons and contractors from being held liable in damages in a civil action in relation to their volunteering their professional services during or immediately following a declared emergency. ... the volunteer professionals will offer their expertise and professional services under the direction of a public official."

OSPE further explained saying, "House Bill 17 [would] provide protection to the many volunteers who wish to contribute their time and expertise, without compensation, for the health and safety of the public in the event of a declared emergency.... The sole intent is for experienced design professionals to provide their best practice and judgment in determining the safety of situations and structures prior to the release of safety services, and search and rescue teams."

In other news at the Ohio Statehouse, House Bill 236, which is supported by OSPE, passed the Ohio House of Representatives on January 26. This legislation, also cosponsored by Representatives Blessing and Landis, requires a registered professional engineer or professional surveyor to complete at least two hours of continuing professional development in professional ethics or rules relevant to the practices of engineering or surveying during each biennial renewal period. The two hours are included in the thirty hours of training already outlined under current law.

Engineers' ethics education bill passes Ohio House and advances to Ohio Senate committee for review

In other news at the Ohio Statehouse, House Bill 236, which is supported by OSPE, passed the Ohio House of Representatives on January 26.

This legislation, cosponsored by Representative Louis W. Blessing, III, PE, (R-Colerain) and Representative Al Landis (R-Dover), requires a registered professional engineer or surveyor to complete at least two hours of continuing professional development in professional ethics or rules relevant to the practices of engineering or surveying during each biennial renewal period. (The two hours are included in the thirty hours of training already outlined under current law.)

"This is a simple bill that will help to ensure professional engineers and surveyors are being made aware of the ethics and rules changes to their professions," said Representative Blessing.

"The addition of ethics training to the professional development curriculum will keep our engineering and surveying community among the best and brightest in the industry," said Representative Landis.

House Bill 236 was referred to the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Labor Committee last Wednesday, February 10, for further consideration.

Thanks to State Representative Louis W. Blessing, III, PE & State Representative Al Landis

The Ohio Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) is grateful to State Representative Louis W. Blessing, III, PE, and State Representative Al Landis for cosponsoring House Bill 17 and House Bill 236 and for supporting OSPE's efforts in connection with these pieces of legislation.

"We at the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers are cognizant of the time and commitment necessary to move a bill through the legislature," said OSPE Vice President of Legislative and Government Affairs Joseph V. Warino, PE, PS, F.NSPE. "Thank you again. We are very appreciative of all of your efforts and your commitment to the engineering profession. OSPE reaffirms its commitment to you in offering any technical assistance our membership can provide with regard to legislative issues that involve the practice of engineering."

OSPE encourages its members to become familiar with these legislators and thank them for their service:

State Representative Louis W. Blessing, III, PE, is serving his second term in the Ohio House of Representatives. He represents the 29th Ohio House District, which includes portions of western Hamilton County.

With an extensive background in electrical engineering, Representative Blessing works as an engineer at Super Systems, Inc. in Cincinnati. Previously he worked at Duke Energy and Nova Engineering.

Representative Blessing earned bachelor's degrees in mathematics and electrical engineering at the University of Cincinnati. He is a licensed professional engineer and a member of OSPE.

In addition to cosponsoring House Bill 17 and House Bill 236 in the 131st Ohio General Assembly (OGA), Representative Blessing was the primary sponsor of House Bill 202, a successful measure coming out of the 130th OGA that implemented computer-based testing for engineering and surveying exams.

In 2014, he was named OSPE's "Legislator of the Year."

Representative Blessing will speak at Ohio Engineers Legislative Day on Tuesday, May 3, at the Sheraton Columbus Hotel Capitol Square. Legislative Day is co-sponsored by OSPE and ASCE Ohio.

State Representative Al Landis is serving his third term in the Ohio House. He represents the 98th district, which includes Tuscarawas County and a portion of Holmes County.

Raised in Tuscarawas County, Representative Landis enjoyed a long career in the steel industry including 33 years at Greer Steel in Dover.

While he presently serves on Dover Chemical's Citizens Advisory Panel, he previously served on the Dover Township Board of Zoning Appeals.

In 2012, Representative Landis was the United Conservatives of Ohio's "Watchdog of the Treasury" and, in 2013, he was named "Legislator of the Year" by the Vietnam Veterans of America Buckeye Council.

Representative Landis will speak at the OSPE Legislative Luncheon on Friday, June 3, at the Cleveland Airport Marriott where the Society is hosting its Spring CPD Conference and Annual Member Meeting, June 2-4. Separate registration is required for this luncheon.

NSPE, state societies defend licensure in states throughout the nation

Working together to avert crises

by Joseph V. Warino, P.E., P.S., F.NSPE, OSPE Vice President of Legislative & Government Affairs

As 2016 begins, the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers' (OSPE's) Legislative and Government Affairs (L&GA) Committee is keeping "a close eye" on 17 active bills that directly impact the future for Ohio's professional engineers (PEs).

I have heard overwhelming support for two of these Ohio bills. Therefore, we have made our collective voice heard at the Ohio Statehouse by providing proponent testimony for House Bill 17, which would provide civil immunity for engineers volunteering services during a declared emergency, and for House Bill 236, which would require continuing professional development (CPD) hours in ethics and rules pertaining to the practice of engineering.

And today these Ohio bills are advancing forward!

In other news here in the Buckeye state, members of OSPE are helping the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Surveyors collaborate with the architects' and landscape architects' boards by serving on an Incidental Practice Committee to study "incidental practice" and possibly look at ways that these boards could provide guidance to their licensees.

Forecasting for the new year: Expect a busy 2016

With a recent flurry of legislative and government affairs activity in mind, I look for more of the same in the new year. My prediction for an active 2016 stems, in part, from my observation that other states' legislatures and governments around the nation have been busy making decisions that have an effect on the practice of engineering. In Ohio and a number of other states, the PE license is being threatened. This activity has commanded the attention of OSPE leaders here in Ohio.

Our WV neighbors have first-hand experience with licensure erosion

The aftermath of the Elk River chemical spill in Charleston, West Virginia, perfectly demonstrates a successful effort to erode the strength and effectiveness of the PE license.

The spill occurred when thousands of gallons of a mixture of crude 4-methylcyclohexanemethanol (MCHM) – used for cleaning coal – and glycol ethers (PPH) were released into the tributary of the Kanawha River in the early days of 2014. The result meant no potable water for 300,000 residents in nine counties.

Following the incident, West Virginia Senate Bill 373, the Aboveground Storage Tank (AST) Act, established a regulatory program that would require West Virginia PEs or individuals certified under a program approved by West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection to perform inspections on above ground storage tanks, render opinions as to the tanks' structural integrity and certify their fitness for use.

While the West Virginia Society of Professional Engineers (WVSPE) supported much of the bill, it lodged an objection to non-PEs doing engineering work, including recommending modifications to tanks that would not pass certification otherwise. For example, WVSPE President Christopher Butler said that if a tank's integrity is not satisfactory, a non-PE could recommend a retrofit for it.

The legislation was signed in March 2014 by West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin and, that summer, the state's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) released an "interpretive rule" providing guidance for complying with the new law. According to the DEP rule, while PEs are required for inspecting level 1 or "high risk" tanks (e.g., located near public water sources, containing hazardous materials or containing 50,000 gallons or more of any substance), non-PE's can inspect other classifications of tanks. Level 2 tanks, which still pose a risk but do not qualify for the most rigorous inspection, and level 3 tanks, which hold water or food and pose a limited threat, may be inspected by the tank's owner or operator or by "any person designated by the owner or operator."

During the public comment period, Butler submitted a letter on behalf of WVSPE to the West Virginia DEP.

"The scope of the AST rule is aligned with the charge of the West Virginia professional engineer," wrote Butler. "However the secretary poses to 'shortcut' other laws to satisfy mandates at the risk of the public health and welfare."

In 2015, Senate Bill 423 amended the AST Act. The number of tanks regulated under the AST Act were reduced from 48,000 to 12,000, of which 5,000 are classified as level 1. Around 7,000 additional tanks are level 2 and their owners may apply to opt out of the AST Act regulation if their tanks are already regulated by some other law.

This new law, which awaits rule making, contains the same language that erodes the PE license, Butler said.

Butler told OSPE, "Several other West Virginia DEP regulations mandate that a PE be the certifying person – for example, mining and solid waste sections have this mandate. However, on this issue the state shortcuts that mandate. They are treating similar issues that could affect the health safety and welfare of West Virginians vastly different."

Butler said that the situation was, "A great illustration of the real world need for professional engineering – and the government then eroded our license."

Ohio is not immune to threats: OSPE fights bad piping legislation

Here in Ohio, we are busy fighting bad legislation that would eliminate the PE's discretion and mandate considering inappropriate piping materials in water, sanitary and storm sewer applications.

House Bill 214, backed by the PVC pipe industry, would remove the professional engineer's autonomy in design. While PVC may be the preferred material for certain applications, it is not acceptable to mandate that a PE defend his or her professional judgment in disqualifying materials for the job at hand.

This legislation would create liability problems for PE's and so we are campaigning against it. OSPE has participated in "interested party" or "IP" meetings and has provided testimony in opposition to this bill.

Similar legislation has been introduced in a number of states around the country and has been met with a large opposition.

OSPE speaks out against discipline-specific licensure that would undermine PE license

This past summer, there was a very high level of awareness, interest and involvement among OSPE leaders with regard to proposed changes to the NCEES model law - changes that would create a protected structural engineering (SE) registration and drastically weaken the PE license. OSPE leaders were quite vocal and 84 percent of OSPE members responding to the Society's poll voiced their opposition to the proposed NCEES model law change. Our message was carried to the NCEES Annual Meeting in Colonial Williamsburg and the proposal was defeated.

In addition to the plastic pipe legislation and the structural engineers' license proposal, there have been other recent threats to the PE license around the country.

Indiana PEs foil Job Creation Commission's unwise proposal to eliminate licensure

Also over the course of the summer, PEs across the country were engrossed by ongoing news of a detrimental proposal put forth by the Indiana Job Creation Commission to eliminate the registration requirement of professional engineers. There was a tremendous outcry by our sister society in Indiana and both ISPE and the National Society of Professional Engineers stepped in to lodge their opposition to the proposal with Indiana Governor Mike Pence.

In testimony, Indiana Society of Professional Engineers Past President Scott Haraburda, PE, PhD, said, "I would feel unsafe crossing a bridge or entering a building not designed or inspected by a licensed engineer."

Success was met, finally, when the Indiana Job Creation Commission rescinded its recommendation in response to the mounting pressure to preserve the public health, safety and welfare by keeping the PE registration intact.

NSPE works to bolster PE licenses in Colorado and California

Just like NSPE helped out with the threat in Indiana and it is supporting mandatory ethics education here in Ohio, NSPE is also coming to the aid of PEs around the country!

Consider the August 2015 Gold King Mine waste water spill, during which personnel from the EPA and Environmental Restoration, LLC spilled three million U.S. gallons of toxic mine waste water and tailings into a tributary of the Animas River near Silverton, Colorado. This environmental disaster emphasizes the need to strengthen federal engineering standards. NSPE stepped forward to urge the EPA and all federal agencies to require PEs on engineering projects.

In the Golden State, NSPE and the California Society of Professional Engineers have been working to ensure that the California Department of Motor Vehicles develops regulations that recognize and incorporate professional engineers in the development of fully autonomous vehicles and their systems.

Members are also serving on an NSPE committee to better define the role of the professional engineer and advocate for the profession.

You are needed

All of our collective accomplishments would not be possible without the strong support of the membership of OSPE. Your dues dollars and your voice are making a difference.

Serving as OSPE's vice president of legislative and government affairs, I want to personally thank the many members that have offered their opinions and provided me with the guidance needed to adequately represent you.

Furthermore, I ask that you continue to be vigilant, raise your level of awareness of actions that can impact the engineering profession and never hesitate to offer the L&GA Committee or OSPE's leadership any insight or opinions with regard to the same. Your involvement will help shape the future role of the professional engineer.

NSPE's first podcast features OSPE advocacy efforts and Ohio House Bill 236

A recent NSPE Update e-newsletter to members featured an article regarding the Gold King Mine disaster and the need to strengthen federal engineering standards by mandating the role of the licensed professional engineer in federal engineering projects.

The article included a link to NSPE's first ever podcast highlighting the Society's advocacy efforts associated with the Gold King Mine disaster and, in other news, its support of Ohio House Bill 236. House Bill 236, supported by OSPE, proposes requiring two hours of ethics/rules training for professional engineers and surveyors for each biennial license renewal period.

House Bill 236 is sponsored by OSPE member Rep. Louis W. Blessing, III, P.E. (R-Colerain) and by Rep. Al Landis (R-Dover). OSPE thanks these state legislators for reinforcing the importance of Ohio ethics laws and rules and for supporting the spirit of the Engineers' Creed, which stipulates that the engineer will "participate in none but honest enterprise" and "live and work according to the laws of man and the highest standards of professional conduct."

In the NSPE podcast, coverage of House Bill 236 runs from 3:50-5:27.

Indiana PE's beat back ill-advised effort to eliminate licensure

OSPE members, remain vigilant against attacks

Thanks to tremendous advocacy efforts by our sister society in Indiana and the National Society of Professional Engineers, the Indiana Job Creation Commission (JCC) has rescinded its recommendation to eliminate professional engineering licensure.

In June, the JCC, which was created in 2014 to examine the licensing of all of the state's professional boards, released its draft report recommending elimination of the PE license in Indiana. The JCC stated that "a voluntary system, such as the self-certification registry, would be a great regulatory structure for the profession."

The Indiana Society of Professional Engineers (ISPE) and the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) quickly responded and urged the JCC and Indiana Governor Mike Pence to reverse the recommendation. ISPE sent a letter to JCC Chairman Nick Rhoad and Governor Pence urging them to remove the recommendation. NSPE sent a letter addressing both the state and national implications of such a recommendation. NSPE urged that the decision be reversed and that the final report submitted to the Governor's office reflect these changes.

The Governor's office immediately responded with its opposition to the recommendation. The final report was amended but still stated that there would be further consideration of the licensure of engineers.

At a public hearing held on August 20, NSPE strongly urged that the decision be rescinded as part of the meeting's formal record. ISPE Immediate Past President Scott Haraburda, PE, PhD, testified saying, "I would feel unsafe crossing a bridge or entering a building not designed or inspected by a licensed engineer." The JCC rescinded its recommendation.

This is a critical reminder to remain vigilant against efforts to compromise professional engineering licensure. Report any concerns to the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers at 614-223-1144 or OSPE@OhioEngineer.com.

Reflections on our successful past advocacy & resolutions for the future

by Holly E. Ross, Legislative Agent, Ohio Society of Professional Engineers

At the threshold of the New Year, it is not unexpected that we might reflect on the events that have transpired over the past 365 days. As we embark on the journey that will be known as "2015," we tally OSPE's legislative accomplishments from the past year:

As a member of OSPE, you have supported a legislative initiative that in March resulted in Ohioans approving State Issue 1, which permits the issuance of bonds to finance public infrastructure capital improvements. Through your OSPE membership you have helped local governments and other government entities finance roads and bridges, wastewater treatment systems, water supply systems, solid waste disposal facilities, storm water and sanitary collection, storage and treatment facilities – for the next 10 years.

As a member of OSPE, you have supported a successful measure to modernize the engineering examination process.

With the passage of House Bill 202, forthcoming generations of graduate engineers and engineer interns will enjoy the convenience of a computer-based test in locations convenient to their homes.

As a member of OSPE, you supported legislation that authorizes counties to undertake regional transportation improvement projects funded by issuing securities and by revenue pledges.

As a member of OSPE, you helped defeat legislation that would have diminished the PE's authority in recommending appropriate piping materials for various jobs. House Bill 417, backed by the PVC piping industry, died in committee thanks in great part to OSPE's opposition.

Yes, it was a good year. But let us not rest on our laurels; let's look ahead! What will you accomplish in the new year?

New Year's Resolutions:

- Vote. Support representatives that are savvy to Ohio's infrastructure, utility, transportation, environment, development, natural resources and technology needs.
- "Keep an ear to the ground" and keep OSPE informed. Contact OSPE at 1-800-654-9481 (Ohio toll-free) or 614-223-1144 with information on any engineering issues. We are especially interested in legislative measures that will have a bearing on the health, safety and welfare of the public as they relate to practice of engineering.
- Serve on OSPE's Legislative Committee as we help guide 131st Ohio General Assembly. Contact OSPE for the date of our next meeting.
- Consider if you have more to offer. Whichever side of the political aisle you favor, as an Ohioan and a registered PE, you could run for office and be an integral part of the legislative process that defines the very world around you. You have much to offer your community!

Fight plan stamping: Hold sacred the seal of the professional engineer

by Joseph V. Warino, P.E., P.S., F.NSPE, OSPE Vice President of Legislative & Government Affairs

The seal of a professional engineer is solely for the use of a person who has satisfactorily met the requirements for registration as a professional engineer in the State of Ohio, as defined in Ohio Revised Code 4733. Furthermore, a professional engineer shall place his seal only on work products he himself has prepared.

"Plan stamping" occurs when a professional engineer places his registration seal on work he did not author or for which he did not have personal professional knowledge and direct supervisory control and responsibility.

In recent years, some plan stamping violations have been a result of out-of-state businesses capitalizing on the expanded development of Ohio's energy resources. Some Ohio-registered professional engineers have been approached by contractors offering compensation for the review and sealing of plans and specifications for work in Ohio's oil and gas industries.

According to John Greenhalge, executive director for the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Surveyors, "The preparation of engineering plans for projects located in Ohio by an individual and/or firm would constitute the practice of engineering and both the individual and the firm would need to be licensed. Additionally, offering and contracting to provide engineering services in Ohio without PE registration and a Certificate of Authorization would violate several sections of Ohio laws and rules governing the practice of engineering."

There have been numerous plan stamping cases cited in which it has been suspected that someone, other than the preparer of the plans, has sealed the documents. The State Board of Registration has dealt with a number of these cases.

Penalties for the improper use of a professional engineering seal can include a fine and/or the suspension or revocation of the professional engineer's license, depending on the severity of the offense, as determined by the State Board of Registration.

Remember, as Ohio-registered professional engineers, it is our ethical responsibility to abide by the rules and regulations of the profession. It is also our responsibility to serve as good stewards of the engineering profession by serving as "watch dogs" and reporting any suspected violations to the State Board of Registration.