
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 2016-2017:

'Autonomous Engineers'?!'

by Joe Warino, PE, PS, F.NSPE, OSPE Vice President of Legislative & Government Affairs

When considering the burgeoning use of "autonomous" vehicles (driver-less vehicles, self-driving vehicles, robotic vehicles further defined as a vehicle that is capable of sensing its environment and navigating without human input), I could not help but draw an immediate parallel to the professional practice of engineering.

Autonomous vehicles detect surroundings using radar, lidar, GPS, odometry and computer vision. Advanced computer systems in these vehicles interpret sensory information to identify appropriate navigation paths, as well as obstacles and relevant signage. In much the same way, professional engineers solicit and utilize the existing environment surrounding them as well as tools available to them in the daily practice of the science of engineering.

The profiles of the most modern engineers include the use of computer software programs for an aide in the design of complex structures. Civil engineers use GPS extensively to assist in defining an appropriate path, as well as identifying obstacles for the mapping of existing facilities and infrastructure.

In the high tech world that we live in, engineers depend on the available technology to perform sometimes the simplest of tasks that require the utmost accuracy. Who among us has not reached for or picked up their calculator to total up purchases made or to calculate the amount to "tip" the waiter or waitress after an enjoyable meal?

I've come to the realization that technology, with its rapidly changing advancements, might just be steering the

ship! This realization compelled me to ask myself, "Can what I am doing today in my profession be accomplished to completion by a robot – or what might be labeled an "autonomous engineer"?"

As professional engineers, it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to stay in tune with the societal needs as well as relevant advancements in present day technology. Continuing professional development (CPD) is just one of the tools available to engineers who wish to become and stay a significant asset going forward.

I would venture to declare that the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers is the most important tool available to Ohio professional engineers. I firmly believe that OSPE is the single most powerful voice for professional engineers, and I invite all Ohio engineers to join and see for themselves.

Together we can prove to the world of science that where engineering is concerned, the most important autonomous feature that is acceptable is the choice of professional engineers to be the best that they can be.

2016 brought OSPE three legislative victories

by Joe Warino, PE, PS, F.NSPE, OSPE Vice President of Legislative & Government Affairs

The year 2016 was productive for OSPE with the state legislature passing two bills – both supported by the Society – that have a direct impact on engineering practice in Ohio. The year also saw the defeat of a bad bill – one opposed by OSPE.

As you may recall, in February 2016, Governor John Kasich signed House Bill 17 on the topic of volunteer immunity. This "Good Samaritan" legislation, which became law on May 17, provides civil immunity for engineers, surveyors, architects, contractors and tradespersons providing volunteer services during a declared emergency. While this legislation was still in consideration, OSPE's Legislative and Government Affairs Committee offered proponent testimony in the 131st Ohio General Assembly and made other efforts to support the bill. OSPE thanks Representatives Louis W. Blessing, III, PE, and Al Landis for serving as the cosponsors for House Bill 17.

More recently, another bill cosponsored by Representatives Blessing and Landis was signed by the Governor. House Bill 236 requires professional engineers and surveyors to complete two continuing professional development (CPD) hours in professional ethics or rules relevant to engineering or surveying practices. This legislation, was introduced with the full support of OSPE.

In your travels, if you have the opportunity to speak with an Ohio legislator, please offer him or her our sincere appreciation for the 131st Ohio General Assembly's action in passing both House Bill 17 and House Bill 236.

Finally, we are also pleased to announce that House Bill 214 (piping materials) died in an Ohio House of Representatives' committee when the lame duck session closed. House Bill 214 would have removed the PE's autonomy in selecting piping materials. Please be aware, this measure could be reintroduced in the new year.

OSPE members, stay vigilant in 2017 as the 132nd Ohio General Assembly begins. With your support, OSPE will remain "the single, most powerful voice representing professional engineers."

OSPE member Andrew Stone, PE, does a fantastic job opposing Ohio House Bill 121

The Ohio Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) provided testimony today to the House State and Local Government Committee on House Bill 121 (piping materials) through member Andrew Stone, PE. Stone, the city engineer and director of public works for Athens, Ohio, did fantastic work in representing OSPE's interests in opposition to the legislation.

In his testimony, Stone said, "House Bill 121 is very broad and vague. It implies that public entities are biased. The bill also addresses a problem that doesn't exist."

Stone explained to the Committee a professional engineer's obligation and service to the public:

"A PE is a problem solver, a scientist, an accountant, and -- above all else -- a steward of the public's safety. The PE must balance the highly-technical sciences of materials, physics, hydraulics, and soil chemistry with the real world realities of material availability, material cost, installation costs, maintenance cost, and life cycle cost. PEs are bound by law and a Code of Ethics to help communities make the best decision for the public."

After highlighting the factors and specifications that PEs evaluate in selecting pipe material for jobs, and after explaining the importance of being able to stock replacement parts, Stone explained the problem with House Bill 121, saying, "Ultimately House Bill 121 hurts communities."

Stone explained that House Bill 121 creates "unnecessary concerns regarding the decision-making of professional engineers." He also said that the legislation "would cost Ohioans more money," and it creates a "slippery slope" in terms of opening the proverbial flood gates for other materials manufacturers to attempt to influence the Ohio General Assembly to benefit their industries.

"The Ohio Society of Professional Engineers and the City of Athens oppose House Bill 121 and its attempt to limit local communities and professional engineers from making the best decisions to protect the public," Stone concluded.

In addition to Stone's oral testimony, written testimony in opposition to House Bill 121 was provided by both NSPE President Kodi Jean Verhalen, PE, Esq., F.NSPE, and OSPE Vice President of Legislative & Government Affairs Joseph V. Warino, PE, PS, F.NSPE.

NSPE & OSPE help defeat a proposal that would have splintered professional engineering

Thanks to the Ohio State Board of Registration for voting against UPLG Motion 12 at the 2016 NCEES Annual Meeting

Earlier this month at the 2016 NCEES Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, the NCEES Council defeated a proposed motion that would have changed the Model Law and encouraged discipline-specific licensure. The NCEES Council vote included 12.5 in favor, 51.5 in opposition and two abstentions to Uniform Procedures and Legislative Guidelines (UPLG) Motion 12.

Motion 12 has been described by proponents as non-substantive. Proponents say the purpose is to merely add "language for structural engineers [that is] parallel to that of professional engineers and professional surveyors."

However, the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) and the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) argue that the impact of UPLG Motion 12 would have been profound and damaging to the PE license. Specifically, the motion encouraged a separate license for structural engineers in states where such a credential does not already exist and a requirement that structural engineers be included as members of jurisdictional licensing boards.

Last year, OSPE polled its members and determined that 84% of respondents indicated their opposition to different proposed changes to Model Law, which included a designated structural engineer's license. Thanks to the collective work of many NSPE state societies and state licensing boards, the 2015 motion was also defeated.

In July 2016, NSPE President Kodi Jean Verhalen, P.E., Esq., F.NSPE, communicated NSPE's concerns regarding UPLG Motion 12 in a letter. Also, in Indianapolis, in private meetings and addressing the NCEES board, President Verhalen reiterated NSPE's long standing position opposing discipline-specific licensure, which would splinter the profession, confuse the public and weaken a strong licensure system. (However, it should be noted that NSPE does not object to PEs individually identifying the fact that they practice in a particular field of engineering, such as structural engineering, or using specialty designations in combination with the PE designation, so long as such communications are in accordance with local practice regulations.)

In Ohio, over the summer of 2016, OSPE appealed to the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Surveyors for help in defeating UPLG Motion 12. In his letter to the State Board of Registration, OSPE President Bob Fuller, PE, F.NSPE, said that OSPE's position is that licensing by discipline is unnecessary and that it erodes the PE license. Fuller requested that the State Board of Registration carry OSPE's message to the 2016 NCEES Annual Meeting later this month and act to stop any discipline-specific licensure initiatives.

OSPE extends its gratitude to the Ohio State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Surveyors for opposing UPLG Motion 12 at the 2016 NCEES Annual Meeting in Indianapolis.

NSPE and OSPE are pleased with the decision of the NCEES Council, and that they voted in a manner that preserves the integrity of the professional engineering licensure system.

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.