

Friday, June 3, 2011

## **Editorial: Build it right**

### **Ohio Senate shouldn't weaken efforts to reform public contracting**

Of all issues confronting Ohio Senate members in the state budget bill, one decision should have been easy: keeping Gov. John Kasich's provision to eliminate absurd and antiquated rules for public construction projects that waste time and taxpayers' money.

The budget proposal passed by the Ohio House of Representatives left Kasich's construction-reform proposals intact, and would at long last have allowed the state and local governments, cities, school districts, universities and other public entities to employ the modern construction-management methods used by the private sector and by governments in other states.

The Senate, however, has added language that waters down the House-passed reforms and would leave the state stuck with 19th-century requirements.

No other state but Ohio still has a law requiring public construction projects to hire four separate, independent "prime contractors" - one each for mechanical, plumbing, electrical and general-trades work. Those contractors like the requirement because it allows each to deal directly with the government entity, including negotiating their own prices and suing the state over conflicts that arise. But having four independent bosses means more conflict and less coordination, which means delays and higher-than-necessary costs for building public works. Estimates are that this system, dating to 1877, raises the cost of construction by at least 10 percent.

Kasich's proposal, left intact in the House version, would have given government builders other, better options than so-called multiple-prime contracting. A key example is the "construction manager at risk" structure, in which companies that want to manage a public building project compete for the business based on their fees and other costs.

**Editorial continued here:** <http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/editorials/stories/2011/06/03/build-it-right.html?sid=101>

###