

OHIO PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Bill Information

HB74 ENACT FY22-23 TRANSPORTATION BUDGET *(OELSLAGER S)*

To make appropriations for programs related to transportation and public safety for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2023, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of those programs.

CURRENT STATUS

3/31/2021 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. immediately

HB110 OPERATING BUDGET *(OELSLAGER S)*

To make operating appropriations for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2023, to levy taxes, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of state programs.

CURRENT STATUS

7/1/2021 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; effective 7/1/21

HB140 MODIFY ELECTION NOTICES, BALLOT LANGUAGE FOR PROPERTY TAX LEVIES *(MERRIN D)*

To enact the "Ballot Uniformity and Transparency Act" to modify the form of election notices and ballot language for property tax levies.

CURRENT STATUS

4/28/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means

HB141 MAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS *(SKINDELL M, UPCHURCH T)*

To make appropriations related to public transportation.

CURRENT STATUS

2/24/2021 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HB146

REGARDS APPLYING PREVAILING WAGE LAW TO PUBLIC PROJECTS (RIEDEL C, MANCHESTER S)

To allow political subdivisions, special districts, and state institutions of higher education to elect to apply the Prevailing Wage Law to public improvement projects.

CURRENT STATUS

6/23/2021 - House Commerce and Labor, (Second Hearing)

HB157

MODIFY MUNICIPAL INCOME TAX RULES - COVID WFH (JORDAN K, EDWARDS J)

To amend Section 29 of H.B. 197 of the 133rd General Assembly to modify municipal income tax employer withholding rules for COVID-19-related work-from-home employees.

CURRENT STATUS

6/2/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means

HB267

LIMIT PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS (JORDAN K)

To limit the duration of public health orders and to allow the General Assembly to act via concurrent resolution in response to a public health emergency if the Governor or Department of Health does not.

CURRENT STATUS

5/4/2021 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government

HB275

EXPAND POLITICAL SUBDIVISION JOINT PURCHASING AUTHORITY (LAMPTON B)

To expand political subdivision joint purchasing authority to expressly include purchases for construction services.

CURRENT STATUS

5/12/2021 - House Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)

HB283

EXPAND DISTRACTED DRIVING LAWS (ABRAMS C, LAMPTON B)

To expand the texting while driving prohibition to a general prohibition against using an electronic wireless communications device while driving, with certain exceptions, and to create data collection requirements based on associated violations of the distracted driving laws.

CURRENT STATUS

6/10/2021 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, House Criminal Justice, (Second Hearing)

HB350 PROHIBIT MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINE *(CUTRONA A)*

To prohibit mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations, requiring proof of COVID-19 vaccination, and certain other actions relating to an individual's COVID-19 vaccination or health status and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

6/22/2021 - House Civil Justice, (First Hearing)

SB4 EXEMPT EMS LINE OPERATORS-PUBLIC RECORDS *(ROEGNER K)*

To include emergency service telecommunicators, protective services workers, certain Ohio National Guard members, and certain mental health care providers as individuals whose residential and familial information is exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Law.

CURRENT STATUS

6/8/2021 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. 9/7/21

SB15 FISCAL OFFICERS-LIABILITY *(WILSON S)*

To change the circumstances in which certain fiscal officers may be held liable for a loss of public funds.

CURRENT STATUS

3/24/2021 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government

SB18 INTERNAL REVENUE CODE *(ROEGNER K, SCHAFFER T)*

To expressly incorporate changes in the Internal Revenue Code since March 27, 2020, into Ohio law, to exclude certain loan amounts forgiven under federal law from the commercial activity tax, to authorize a commercial activity tax exclusion for Bureau of Workers' Compensation dividends paid to employers, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

3/31/2021 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. immediately

SB32 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION *(RULLI M)*

To require the Director of Transportation to establish an electric vehicle charging station grant rebate program and to make an appropriation.

CURRENT STATUS

2/17/2021 - Senate Transportation, (First Hearing)

SB56 INDEMNITY-DESIGN CONTRACTS *(BLESSING III L)*

To regulate the use of indemnity provisions in professional design contracts related to public improvements.

CURRENT STATUS

6/22/2021 - House Civil Justice, (First Hearing)

SB67 STUDY PROGRESS / CHALLENGES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS *(WILLIAMS S)*

To establish a committee to study the progress and challenges of African Americans in Ohio and to make an appropriation.

CURRENT STATUS

3/16/2021 - Senate Finance, (First Hearing)

SB93 REQUIRE VOTE-COUNTY SALES TAX INCREASE *(ANTANI N)*

To require voter approval of any increase in the rate of a county sales tax.

CURRENT STATUS

3/3/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means

SB97 MUNICIPAL INCOME TAX-WORK FROM HOME *(ROEGNER K)*

To modify municipal income tax employer withholding rules for COVID-19-related work-from-home employees

CURRENT STATUS

5/12/2021 - Senate Ways and Means, (First Hearing)

SB152 FRAUD, WASTE, ABUSE TASK FORCE *(HOAGLAND F)*

To establish the Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Task Force in the office of the Attorney General and to make an appropriation.

CURRENT STATUS

4/21/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance

SB169 PROHIBIT MANDATORY VACCINATIONS *(BRENNER A)*

To prohibit mandatory vaccinations against the coronavirus, to prohibit requiring proof of vaccinations generally, and to declare an emergency.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

5/26/2021 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, Senate Health, (First Hearing)

SB209 MASK MANDATES (BRENNER A)

With regard to mask mandates and facial covering requirements for public schools, state institutions of higher education, and businesses.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

7/13/2021 - Introduced

🔄 Week in Review

ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Ohio and its political subdivisions could be in line for more than \$1 billion to help address the opioid epidemic after the announcement of a \$26 billion nationwide agreement with opioid manufacturer Johnson & Johnson and the three largest distributors of the drugs announced by Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost on Wednesday. Yost's office said that in addition to paying the monetary settlement, Johnson & Johnson along with Cardinal Health, McKesson and AmerisourceBergen will have to make significant changes to help prevent a similar crisis from happening again. A spokesman for Yost said if the state receives full participation by its political subdivisions in the settlement, Ohio could receive up to \$829 million from the three distributors and up to \$197 million from Johnson & Johnson.

FY22-23 BUDGET

Voices on both sides of the political spectrum sized up the new biennial budget Friday, with Policy Matters Ohio praising low-income family supports while ruing another round of tax cuts and the Buckeye Institute coming to the defense of the latter for employers seeking to relocate or expand and families working to pay their bills. In the Cleveland City Club's last scheduled virtual gathering, CEO Dan Moulthrop moderated a panel discussion including State News Bureau reporter Andy Chow, Buckeye Institute Research Fellow Greg Lawson and Policy Matters Executive Director Hannah Halbert, who got the first take on HB110 (Oelslager), a 2,438-page budget bill with a number of provisions purportedly unrelated to the budget.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Office of Child Support will receive \$2 million in federal grant funding to expand a program that educates teenagers about the emotional, financial and legal realities of parenthood, according to a release from the department. Program activities are designed to reduce unplanned pregnancies, promote economic mobility, build healthy relationship skills, teach parenting skills, prevent relationship violence and enhance life skills. More information about the program is available at <https://tinyurl.com/3tb8ubfp>.

Speaking at Wexner Medical Center Thursday, First Lady Fran DeWine discussed how hospitals can help parents enroll their newborns in the Ohio Governor's Imagination Library (OGIL) and receive a free book by mail each month for children from birth to age 5. Forty percent of eligible Ohio children are currently enrolled, and DeWine said she believes that could reach 50 percent by the end of 2021.

CITIES

A recent study out of Ohio State University (OSU) is the first to calculate how much shaded areas in cities help lower the temperature and reduce the "urban heat island" effect. Researchers created a 3D digital model of a section of Columbus and determined what effect the shade of the buildings and trees in the area had on land surface temperatures over the course of one hour on one summer day. "We can use the information from our model to formulate guidelines for community greening and tree planting efforts, and even where to locate buildings to maximize shading on other buildings and roadways," said Jean-Michel Guldmann, co-author of the study and professor emeritus of city and regional planning at OSU.

CIVIL RIGHTS

The Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission (Ohio MLK Commission) recently announced that it is now accepting nominations for the awards to be presented at the January 2022 Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration. Further details on the event itself will be released in the coming months.

CORONAVIRUS

While a reinstatement of the statewide mask mandate is not being considered as Ohio continues to see more COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, schools should plan for "strong guidance" from the administration as children prepare to return next month, Gov. Mike DeWine said Friday. "There's one way out of this, and that is that more people get vaccinated," DeWine told reporters following his remarks celebrating Breeze Airways' inaugural flight from the John Glenn International Airport in Columbus.

With COVID-19 cases again on the rise in Ohio and across the nation, the Ohio Department of Health's (ODH) Chief Medical Officer Bruce Vanderhoff held a press conference Wednesday with two fellow doctors to address vaccine hesitancy and stress the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. Driven by the spread of the more contagious Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus, Ohio is seeing a steady increase in

infections after a long period of decline. The two-week average of cases per 100,000 residents has more than doubled, Vanderhoff said. Daily case totals have risen sharply recently, reaching 785 on Wednesday. Hospitalizations are also on the rise, though ICU admissions and deaths remain low.

While Gov. Mike DeWine signed lawmakers' prohibition on public school and university COVID vaccine mandates, students, faculty and staff will be returning to classes and campuses several weeks before the new law takes effect. Under HB244 (Lampton-White), public schools and higher education institutions cannot require anyone to take a vaccine not yet fully approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA); COVID vaccines now widely in use are being administered under emergency use authorization. DeWine, who's been an emphatic proponent of the vaccines, said via a spokesman he hopes forthcoming full approval from the FDA will render the new law moot. The FDA granted Friday a request for priority review of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Over the weekend, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) issued a news release urging caution at residential camps following reports of COVID-19 outbreaks linked to two camps in the western part of the state. ODH has released updated residential camp guidance to advise campers and camp operators of best prevention practices which can be found online at <https://tinyurl.com/34tebchm>. The guidance recommends implementing layered prevention approaches at camps attended by any campers who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This involves use of multiple strategies that the department says have been shown to be effective at controlling spread of the disease, including masking, social distancing, hand washing and frequent cleaning and sanitation.

CORRECTIONS

Ten security staff of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) are under internal investigation or have resigned and could face criminal prosecution for the death of a newly admitted, 56-year-old obese inmate who was thrown to the ground at least four times and fell another 12 times before dying from apparent heart failure. Inmate Michael McDaniel had been at the Correctional Reception Center (CRC) for roughly two weeks, DRC Director Annette Chambers-Smith said, when he became involved in a verbal confrontation with two female guards while locked in his cell on Feb. 6, 2021. Although their accounts of how the argument started contradict available video and other inmate testimony, department investigators found after guards had removed him from the cell in handcuffs, their initial use of force (UOF) in taking McDaniels to the ground was justified. Democratic member of the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC), including Sens. Hearcel Craig (D-Columbus) and Sandra Williams (D-Cleveland), Rep. Adam Miller (D-Columbus) and Vice Chair Sedrick Denson (D-Cincinnati), are calling for a "full investigation and accounting" of the death of McDaniel while in the care of DRC.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ohio could see over 15,000 new jobs, \$13 billion in economic activity and \$2.5 billion in tax revenue in the next 25 years if it takes certain steps to promote Advanced Air Mobility (AAM), according to a recent study by Crown Consulting and other partners. The findings were discussed during the recent "Ohio Air Mobility Symposium" organized by Ohio State University (OSU) students and featuring panelists that included DriveOhio Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Center Director Fred Judson.

ECONOMY

A recent report by Scioto Analysis found that White male workers in Ohio out-earned other groups in 2019, citing data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. On average, White male workers made \$58,779; non-White males made \$47,214; White women made \$39,588 and non-White women made \$35,948, Scioto Analysis said. The earnings gap between White men and other workers was \$560 million in 2019, though it previously fell to \$470 million in 2011. From 2011 to 2015, the gap increased to 21 percent as a result of higher earnings for White male workers, and it has been between \$560 million and \$570 million since then.

EDUCATION

Friday's meeting of the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) Task Force on Best Academic Practice Models for Black Students had members continuing discussions about how to best provide education to Black students. State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria said that since the last meeting of the task force, he heard about best practices in six broad areas: leadership, staff involvement and development, classroom practices and academic supports, student supports and empowerment, community and family supports and data analysis and utilization.

A federal judge set a hearing for December to consider both an injunction request and merits of the case in Hamilton County resident Daniel Regenold's lawsuit alleging the State Board of Education abridged his free speech rights with limits on public testimony about race-related topics. Earlier this month, Judge James Graham of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio granted a

motion from the state to dismiss claims against the State Board of Education itself, but allowed claims against individual board members, including President Laura Kohler, to proceed. Regenold filed the lawsuit in April after being denied the ability to speak in person at the April board meeting under Kohler's policy of taking testimony on race-related topics in writing only. She instituted that policy after months' worth of testimony responding to the board's July 2020 resolution on racism and equity, as well as the Ohio Department of Education's citation of the 1619 Project, a *New York Times* essay collection, in a newsletter for social studies teachers.

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) is inviting states to apply to receive the second and larger installment of money provided in the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act to assist children experiencing homelessness. The second round of funding constitutes \$600 million of the \$800 million provided in the ARP for the Homeless Children and Youth (HCY) Fund, and USDOE said states and schools should be able to access the money before the start of the academic year. The money is meant to be used to identify homeless children and youth, provide wraparound services to address effects of the pandemic, and provide assistance to enable the children and youth to attend school and participate fully in activities, according to the federal agency.

The Ohio Department of Commerce's (DOC) Division of Financial Institutions announced Wednesday that four organizations would receive funding for financial literacy education efforts directed toward children and young adults in 20 rural Ohio counties. The grant totals \$75,930 and will be divided among DoverPhila Federal Credit Union, Denison University, Junior Achievement of Mahoning Valley and Junior Achievement of Northwest Ohio.

The state financial oversight panel for Niles City Schools this week recommended Auditor of State Keith Faber release the district from fiscal emergency status. Niles is the only school district in fiscal emergency.

ELECTIONS 2021

Former President Donald Trump Tuesday made it clear that only Mike Carey has his endorsement for the 15th Congressional District, calling him a "great friend," and someone the voters "will cherish for the rest of your lives." In remarks lasting about five minutes on a teleconference call with Carey, Trump encouraged supporters to get out and vote for Carey in the special election primary to replace former U.S. Rep. Steve Stivers, now the head of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

ELECTIONS 2022

U.S. Rep. Anthony Gonzalez (R-Canton) outraised Republican challenger Max Miller in the second quarter of the year, even with Miller's appearing with former President Donald Trump at a rally in Lorain County last month. Trump is backing Miller, a former aide, against Gonzalez after the second-term congressman voted to impeach Trump, citing Trump's conduct before and during a riot at the U.S. Capitol involving Trump supporters in January. In reports filed last week with the Federal Elections Commission (FEC), Gonzalez reported \$591,016 in net contributions, and spent about \$110,279, leaving \$1.5 million on hand. Miller reported \$337,340 in net contributions, but spent \$310,351, and has \$533,153 on hand. A third Republican, Jonah Schulz, reported \$11,565 in net contributions, \$6,206 in spending and \$7,539 on hand. Democrat Matthew Diemer reported \$2,575 in contributions, \$2,277 in spending and \$2,497 on hand.

Republican businessman Mike Gibbons has the most cash among all of the candidates seeking to succeed U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) in next year's Senate race thanks to loaning his committee \$5.9 million, while Republican businessman Bernie Moreno and U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan (D-Niles) showed the most prowess in raising cash for their campaigns. In total, Ohio candidates for the seat raised nearly \$11 million combined over the quarter.

The owner of a Newark funeral home announced Monday that he will be seeking the Republican nomination for the Ohio Senate's 31st Senate District in 2022, when the current seat holder, Sen. Jay Hottinger (R-Newark), is unable to run for reelection due to term limits. Chute, who said this will be his first run for public office, is a licensed funeral director with Vensil & Chute Funeral Homes. He is a graduate of Newark High School and returned to the area after attending Ohio University and the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science.

Republican U.S. Senate candidate Bernie Moreno announced this week that Lana Marks, a former ambassador to South Africa in the Trump administration, is joining his campaign's steering committee.

Moreno said his campaign's steering committee was instrumental in helping him to outraise all competitors in his first fundraising quarter.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

For the week ending July 17, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) reported 12,619 initial traditional unemployment claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The number of initial traditional unemployment claims increased by 2,666 since last week, when ODJFS reported 9,953 initial claims.

ENERGY/UTILITIES

Increasing calls for greater regulatory oversight of electric transmission "gold-plating" have prompted the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) to launch separate investigations into how transmission infrastructure connecting power generators to local utilities is planned and built on a regional and national level and whether average consumers are being overcharged. FERC and OPSB both opened new case dockets last week to examine utility transmission planning and billing, the latter an additional requirement of 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) repeal legislation HB128 (Hoops-Stein).

New "fracking" rules proposed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) would for the first time allow simultaneous drilling and production of oil and gas within close proximity, subject to strict precautions against explosions and well blow-outs. Announced Friday, ODNR's Division of Oil and Gas Resource Management (DOGRM) rule package seeks to protect surrounding communities and ecosystems while allowing the industry to extract profits more quickly.

Though he has not been officially indicted as part of an ongoing federal investigation surrounding the passage of nuclear bailout bill 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin), new court filings made Thursday allege former Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) Chairman Sam Randazzo took \$4.3 million from FirstEnergy Corp. to further the utility's interests before the commission. Randazzo was appointed chairman of the commission by Gov. Mike DeWine in February 2019, but resigned more than a year and a half later after federal agents executed a search warrant on Randazzo's Columbus home. DeWine, facing criticism over that pick in light of the new court filing, issued a statement later in the day defending his pick of Randazzo and adding that if the allegations against the former chairman are true, "his motives were not known by me or my staff." Just a day later than the one-year anniversary of the arrest of former House Speaker Larry Householder on federal corruption charges stemming from the passage of 133-HB6, federal authorities Thursday announced they were charging FirstEnergy with conspiracy in the case. They also announced they had reached an agreement with the utility to defer that prosecution as long as FirstEnergy Corp. continues to cooperate with their investigation.

ENVIRONMENT

The Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (OAQDA) board recently approved two new projects with bond financing totaling up to \$2.85 million to support 130 West 2nd Street, LLC in Dayton as it implements energy efficiency upgrades. The financing is provided through OAQDA's Clean Air Improvement Program (CAIP), which supports clean air facility improvements statewide through its bond financing and related tax benefits.

FEDERAL

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) opened his call with reporters Tuesday by discussing ongoing bipartisan negotiations on infrastructure legislation, saying "if we get it right, it's going to be great for the country." He noted that 43 percent of public roadways nationally are in "poor or mediocre" condition and that over 46,000 bridges are considered "structurally deficient," adding that Ohio faces these problems as well.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) used his weekly tele-press conference to urge passage of federal legislation that he said would make it easier for workers to organize and collectively bargain and punish companies that use unfair tactics to stop workers from joining a union. Brown said unions have made and continue to make the hard work of Ohioans pay off, leading to better benefits and better wages. He said the bill would begin to level the playing field between workers and corporations after years of policies that he argued are corporate centered, from trade to taxation to organizing rules.

President Joe Biden traveled to Cincinnati Wednesday evening to hold a town hall broadcast on CNN, addressing issues ranging from the pandemic to a pending infrastructure bill in Congress. He expressed hope that a bipartisan deal will come together on infrastructure, despite Republicans' voting against a procedural vote on the measure this week. The president noted the importance of fixing bridges and roads across the country and also highlighted the jobs the endeavor would create.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The Statehouse has been experiencing high temperatures this week after a water pipe burst on Sunday and caused damage to the HVAC system, as well as the elevator in the north light court. Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) spokesman Mike Rupert said in an email air conditioning repairs are expected to be done by the end of the week. CSRAB said in a statement earlier this week the damage to the elevator was "extensive" and is expected to take a few months to repair.

GOVERNOR

Gov. Mike DeWine said Friday he's appointing Natasha R. Kennedy to the Logan County Court of Common Pleas, Family Court, to replace retired Judge Dan Bratka. Kennedy will need to run for election in November 2022 to keep the seat. Kennedy, of Bellefontaine, has been a magistrate for the family court division since August 2019. Previously, she was a magistrate in the court's general division and an assistant county prosecutor.

The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI) Advisory Board highlighted Thursday the upcoming release of its "Compassion Map" app, which will provide a map of faith- and community-based organizations across the state for use by government, nonprofit leaders and clients. Board Director Michele Reynolds explained that the office will soon launch its "get on the map" initiative to encourage faith and community-based groups to undergo the process to be listed on the Compassion Map app. Also included on the map will be relevant contact information for the organizations listed.

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Kimberly Wallis of Broadview Heights (Cuyahoga County), Amista Naylor Lipot of Beverly (Washington County), Andrea E. Hoffman of Marion (Marion County), Kelly Maynard of Dublin (Franklin County) and Randi Clites of Ravenna (Portage County) to the Rare Disease Advisory Council for terms beginning July 21, 2021 and ending April 22, 2023.

- Bradley G. Beach of North Canton (Stark County) to the Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission for a term beginning July 21, 2021 and ending July 20, 2024.

- Kristi Burre of Pickerington (Fairfield County) to the Early Childhood Advisory Council for a term beginning July 20, 2021 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Ward J. Timken, Jr. of Canton (Stark County) to the Northeast Ohio Medical University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 22, 2021 and ending Sept. 21, 2030.
- William C. Wappner of Mansfield (Richland County) reappointed to the Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors for a term beginning July 26, 2021 and ending June 30, 2026.
- John M. Hoopgarner of Dover (Tuscarawas County) reappointed to the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission for a term beginning July 21, 2021 and ending June 29, 2027.
- Holly Christmann of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission for a term beginning July 21, 2021 and ending June 29, 2026.
- Gordon M. Gough of Dublin (Franklin County) to the Governor's Executive Workforce Board for a term beginning July 21, 2021 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Gregory P. Sample of Dayton (Montgomery County) to the Broadband Expansion Program Authority for a term beginning July 21, 2021 and ending July 20, 2025.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Recently enacted law on clinicians', institutions' and insurers' ability to decline to perform or pay for health care services contrary to their beliefs and principles drew the objection from a group representing family doctors. The language in HB110 (Oelslager), added in the Senate, states those entities can decline to perform or pay for a service that "violates the practitioner's, institution's or payer's conscience as informed by the moral, ethical or religious beliefs or principles held by the practitioner, institution or payer." The Ohio Association of Family Physicians (OAFP) said in a statement the new law upsets the balance between providers' rights and patient care.

The Commission on Infant Mortality heard from software company RiskLD at its Wednesday meeting, with Founder R.K. Khosla explaining that use of the app in Cleveland's University Hospitals saw massively reduced "serious safety events" with expecting mothers and similarly reduced litigation costs. Khosla explained that the company's app is designed to reduce medical errors in labor and delivery units, noting such errors are driven by lack of situational awareness and failure to adhere to best practices.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Now at the University of Toronto, Dexter Voisin will join Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) as the next dean of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences in January. He succeeds former Dean Cleve Gilmore who held the position for more than 20 years.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

A new report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) titled "Out of Reach: the High Cost of Housing" states that the average price of rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Ohio outpaces the average wage for renters seeking to spend 30 percent or less of their total income on housing and utilities. According to the report, the average wage of renters in Ohio is \$14.84 per hour, while the two-bedroom apartment "housing wage" required to rent such an apartment without spending more than 30 percent of one's income on rent and utilities is \$16.64 per hour. Approximately 34 percent of Ohioans are renters, comprising 1.59 million households.

JUDICIAL

One Ohio judge faces a one-year suspension from the bench without pay for "gross abuse" of contempt powers, while another is headed for a stayed suspension and sexual harassment awareness training if the Ohio Supreme Court upholds recent recommendations from the Board of Professional Conduct. The Hon. Mark Repp, Tiffin-Fostoria Municipal Court's presiding judge, had led the jurisdiction for most of two decades in 2020 when he violated multiple Rules of Judicial Conduct and Professional Conduct in a single day, though evidence suggests it was not the first time Repp, a former Chicago/Cook County state's attorney, had skirted Supreme Court rules. In the second case, Judge Theodore Newton Berry of the Hamilton County Municipal Court is accused of sending Facebook messages and texts with "offensive and sexually explicit content" to a court reporter who had just been hired.

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

The Ohio Restaurant Association (ORA) announced Lt. Gov. Jon Husted as the recipient of one of two "Outstanding Public Official of the Year" awards at its recent virtual 2021 Industry Awards Celebration, which spotlights top leaders and professionals within Ohio's restaurant, food service and hospitality industry. "This award honors public officials who fight for the best interest of restaurant community businesses -- their owners, operators and employees. And this past year, Lt. Governor Husted certainly was a large support to Ohio's restaurant industry," said John Barker, ORA president and CEO.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Cuyahoga County's attempt to create a chartered police force with authority over all municipalities in its boundaries was struck down by the Ohio Supreme Court years ago as a constitutional and statutory overreach. Its efforts to form an electric utility to compete with

Cleveland Public Power may fare no better. The Ohio Attorney General's Office says an electric utility operating within a county -- even a chartered one like Cuyahoga -- appears equally problematic and a likely violation of Article X, Section 3 of the Ohio Constitution.

MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM

A Franklin County Common Pleas judge declined Paramount Advantage's request to freeze implementation of new Medicaid managed care contracts amid its legal challenge to the award process.

Judge Julie Lynch of Franklin County Common Pleas Court also referred the case to Magistrate Jennifer Hunt. A combined hearing on Paramount's request for a temporary injunction and trial on the merits is scheduled for 9 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 12.

Ohio has not yet defined the services and other purposes it plans to spend extra funding in the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) set aside for home- and community-based services (HCBS), but recently filed a plan that spells out how it will engage stakeholders to determine the best uses for the money.

Maureen Corcoran, director of the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM), told *Hannah News* the submission recently filed with the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is "a plan to plan," given that ODM was focused heavily on state budget deliberations until now.

MENTAL HEALTH

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) announced that Ohio will receive a funding boost from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to help address mental illness and addiction in the state. Ohio will receive over \$86 million in one-time funding to supplement Ohio's Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant subsidies as a part of a national \$2.5 billion COVID-19 relief package. The Community Mental Health Service Block Grant aims to provide community mental health services, for which Ohio will receive \$25.8 million, and the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant seeks to establish and maximize addiction treatment infrastructure, for which Ohio will receive \$60.5 million.

NATURAL RESOURCES

A new accessible kayak launch will give people of all abilities a chance to better enjoy the water, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). The new accessible kayak launch was installed at the park's existing boat ramp on Pine Lake, near the public beach. Kayaks, canoes and paddleboats can be rented from the general store at the park.

ODNR dedicated two new H2Ohio wetlands in Northwest Ohio. The Fruth Wetland Nature Preserve restoration project in Seneca County and the Redhorse Bend Wetland Restoration in Sandusky County were completed as part of Gov. Mike DeWine's H2Ohio initiative to help reduce sediment and nutrients going to the Western Lake Erie Basin.

Indian Lake is experiencing significant aquatic vegetation growth this summer, according to ODNR, which notes that there are many factors contributing to this growth, "many of which are natural and good indicators of good water quality." ODNR's Division of Parks and Watercraft has deployed two weed harvesters to ensure that the lake's main channels remain navigable for boats. Additionally, limited chemical spraying is being done, "but with extreme caution so additional phosphorus and nitrogen are not released into Indian Lake."

More boaters can now enjoy time on the water at Buckeye Lake State Park, thanks to 25 new docks and 50 slips added by ODNR. The new docks, which are 24 ft. long and 7 ft. wide, replace old docks removed in 2014. They were installed at Fairfield Beach, near Lakeshore Drive. They are currently rented for the 2021 season and can accommodate any type of boat, including personal watercraft. The new docks are rented through a lottery system offered by the park.

Alum Creek State Park recently moved its park operations to the newly renovated park office at 3615 S. Old State Rd. in Delaware, according to ODNR. The new office is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for watercraft registrations, boat inspections and general park visitor information. The park's new office location actually served as Alum Creek's park headquarters until 2015.

The ODNR Division of Wildlife, in partnership with the Stream + Wetlands Foundation and Ultium Cells LLC, recently announced the construction of a 172-acre habitat restoration project at Mosquito Creek Wildlife Refuge in Trumbull County. The project includes more than 130-acres of restored wetlands on a site that was previously farmed to control woody invasive plants before the project was initiated.

OHIO HISTORY

The hundredth anniversary of the birth of Ohio native John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth in space and one of the state's U.S. senators for more than 20 years, was celebrated throughout the week in Cambridge and nearby New Concord. In addition, OSU's Glenn College updated its displays reflecting Glenn's life, legacy and relationship to the college.

PENSIONS

The Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) announced that while it still looks to institute a temporary freeze on cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for retiree benefits, that can't happen next year as planned given that it would have required a statutory

change. Next year's increases will be 3 percent for those who retired before Jan. 7, 2013; those who retired since then will see COLAs matched to the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) but no higher than 3 percent. OPERS and other state pension funds use a so-called simple COLA, meaning the adjustments do not compound and are always calculated based on a retiree's original benefit. Past COLAs already built into retirees' benefit payments would not be affected by the freeze plan. The system wanted a two-year freeze starting with the 2022 COLAs to help address unfunded liabilities and shore up the long-term financial outlook. Paired with that was a plan to have new retirees' COLAs start two years into retirement instead of one. The system said the plan would have reduced unfunded liabilities by about \$3 billion or 15 percent.

An independent review of the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) commissioned by the Ohio Retired Teachers Association (ORTA) says the pension fund overpays financial firms to the detriment of beneficiaries, is secretive and lacks proper legislative oversight. The system responded with a report saying its 10-year performance exceeds that of most peer funds and noted it provided tens of thousands of pages' worth of material to ORTA's investigator, among other arguments. ORTA hired Edward Siedle of Benchmark Financial Services Inc. to do an independent review of STRS. He later sued STRS, represented by former Attorney General Marc Dann, to demand release of records for the investigation, alleging STRS and vendor CEM Benchmarking misused a trade secrets exemption to withhold documents that should be made public.

PEOPLE

Former U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich, a current candidate for Cleveland mayor who was also the city's youngest mayor when he was elected in 1977, released a book in June discussing the privatization of municipal utilities and his efforts to fight the privatization of Cleveland's electric utility Muni Light. In **The Division of Light and Power**, Kucinich writes about how the city had been threatened by one of America's largest banks unless he agreed to sell Muni Light to the bank's business partner.

POLITICS

Members of the House Democratic Caucus will meet with Ohioans at town hall meetings across the state this summer, House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) has announced. The "Ohio Promise: Opportunity Agenda Tour" will feature discussions on issues like jobs, economic development, the state budget, health care, voting rights and the 2021 redistricting process, according to House Democrats.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Police veterans had one thing in common at the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services' (OCJS) Monday panel discussion on future law enforcement recruitment. They were all women, and they all believed the male-dominated profession had much to gain as well as much to offer from an increased focus on female peace officers. Housed within the Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS), OCJS's Office of Law Enforcement Recruitment (LER) led by Director Sarah Shendy hosted the forum, joined by Ohio State University (OSU) Police Chief Kimberly Spears McNatt, Hocking College Police Chief Tiffany Tims, Kent State University police Ofc. Diane Dudziak and former Cleveland police Sgt. Charmin Leon of the Center for Policing Equity (CPE) in Los Angeles.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) has begun an initiative with neighboring state law enforcement agencies to focus on enforcing "move over" laws. The effort began at 12:01 a.m. Sunday and continues until 11:59 a.m. Saturday, July 24. Participants include the state police in Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. From 2016 to 2020, the release said, OSHP cruisers were involved in 56 "'move over' related" crashes, and the patrol has recorded more than 25,000 citations for that offense.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol announced the promotion of two of its troopers on Tuesday. Chuck A. Jones has been promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel and is transferring from his current assignment as the commander of the patrol's Office of Training, Recruitment and Diversity to serve in the Office of the Superintendent. Jones' current assignment will be filled by John C. Altman, who was promoted to the rank of major. With the promotion, Altman has transferred from his current assignment as commander of the Findlay District headquarters to serve as commander in the patrol's Office of Training, Recruitment and Diversity.

TAXATION

Tax Commissioner Jeff McClain has put himself in the unusual position of asking the Ohio Supreme Court to remand complaints filed by an air delivery company for tax periods dating to 2007 that he had previously urged the state Board of Tax Appeals to dismiss. The Court granted his request Thursday, finding "tolled" or extended filing deadlines in COVID-19 omnibus 133-HB197 (Powell-Merrin) apply to administrative proceedings -- including tax appeals -- as well as civil and criminal and civil cases.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

During his prepared remarks at Concourse C, where passengers were awaiting a flight to New Orleans, Gov. Mike DeWine welcomed Breeze Airways to Columbus, noting the company also recently started serving the Akron-Canton area. "Right before the pandemic began, I talked with the leadership at JobsOhio and said that we really have to start emphasizing more flights out of Ohio, more flights into Ohio and more direct flights when we can get those," DeWine said. "Breeze coming into Ohio is the first really great success, and we hope we see many, many more successes."

The Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission received updates on its toll collection system and customer service center projects during Monday's meeting. Executive Director Ferzan Ahmed reported that the customer service center implementation will be completed in two phases. The first phase is to implement the new system to work with the existing toll collection system, while the second phase will be to integrate the new customer service center with the new toll collection system.

Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Director Jack Marchbanks travelled to Zanesville Tuesday to kick off the \$88 million reconstruction of Interstate 70 through that city. The project includes the resurfacing of the freeway from U.S. Route 40 to State Route 93 and affects 16 bridges, including the bridges over the Licking and Muskingum rivers, ODOT said. It is one of a number of projects the agency has been highlighting as part of the 2021 road construction season.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Both jobs and the unemployment rate increased in June, according to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The unemployment rate increased from 5 percent in May to 5.2 percent in June, while nonagricultural wage and salary employment increased by 31,300, from 5,289,500 to 5,320,800. The number of workers unemployed in Ohio in June was 291,000, up from 278,000 in May. The number of unemployed has decreased by 297,000 in the past 12 months from 588,000. The June unemployment rate for Ohio decreased from 10.3 percent in June 2020. The U.S. unemployment rate for June was 5.9 percent, up from 5.8 percent in May, and down from 11.1 percent in June 2020.

Former Ohio Attorney General Marc Dann announced his firm and Andrew Engel of Advocate Attorneys had refiled a lawsuit to rescind the state's terminated participation in the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) programs in Franklin County.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) and its Ohio On-Site Consultation Program have joined forces with the OhioAgribusiness Association and the four state area offices of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to raise awareness and develop agribusiness industry-specific safety education and training, according to BWC.

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) announced recently that it had again extended a deadline for long-term care facilities to seek reimbursement for investments in indoor air quality (IAQ) regarding COVID-19. Facilities now have until Friday, Dec. 31 to apply. The initial deadline had been Dec. 30, 2020, though that was previously extended to March 31, 2021 after federal legislation passed. The BWC's COVID-19 IAQ Assistance Program provides health care related businesses with financial reimbursement to help cover improvement costs due to the pandemic. Eligible entities include nursing homes, assisted living facilities, hospices, senior centers and substance use disorder residential treatment providers.

The Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) has begun accepting applications for its Workplace Wellness Grant Program (WWGP), which assists employers in creating and implementing these programs.

BWC said they consist of a health-risk appraisal, a biometric assessment and programs that address those risk factors. Employers can receive \$300 per participating employee over a four-year period, up to a maximum amount of \$15,000 per policy. The grants are open to businesses that do not have an existing wellness plan and which meet other eligibility requirements.

WORKFORCE

Lt. Gov. Jon Husted announced Tuesday that the 10th application period for the state's TechCred program will open Sunday, Aug. 1 at www.TechCred.Ohio.gov and close on Tuesday, Aug. 31. The first eight rounds have led to approval of 1,310 businesses and 23,723 credentials. The ninth round was held in June, and its results will be released in the coming weeks.

A new report from Policy Matters Ohio (PMO) and Essential Ohio found that while 30 percent of Ohioans work in jobs deemed essential during the pandemic, their median pay is 12.9 percent less than workers holding non-essential positions. PMO also noted essential workers face "far greater" risk of contracting COVID-19 and bringing it home to their families as a result of working these jobs.