

## 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

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#### **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

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#### **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

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#### **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

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**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)

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## **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)

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## **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

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## **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)

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## **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

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## **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)

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## 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

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## 🔄 Week in Review

### ABORTION

People in the Southwest Ohio city of Lebanon can now see a billboard with the message, "Abortion is legal in all of Ohio." The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio said it placed the billboard advertisement in response to the Lebanon City Council's approving an ordinance banning abortion and abortion-related services within city limits.

Ohio Right to Life (ORTL) Thursday announced the introduction of the Abortion Pill Reversal Information Act by Reps. Kyle Koehler (R-Springfield) and Sarah Fowler Arthur (R-Rock Creek). According to ORTL, HB378 "would build on existing informed consent laws to require abortion facilities to inform women that chemical abortions can possibly be reversed to save their unborn child's life." However, NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio responded that, "So-called abortion reversal ideas are founded in lies about how medication abortion works and an attempt to spread more misinformation about abortion care. This false information should never be allowed to be written into state law."

### ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Newly released data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics indicate Ohio saw a 21.9 percent increase in fatal overdoses in 2020 compared with the previous year. The provisional data shows Ohio had 5,215 overdose deaths in 2020, up from 4,279 overdose deaths in 2019. The increase is in line with a larger national trend. More than 93,000 people died of a drug overdose in the U.S. last year, an over 29 percent increase from 2019.

### AGRICULTURE

The Ohio Grape Industries Committee (OGIC) will soon unveil its new documentary highlighting the state's grape growing industry, according to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg). The short film shows how the Vineyard Expansion Assistance Program (VEAP) is working to expand new and existing vineyards throughout the state, ODAg said in a news release. The goal is to create conversation around Ohio wineries and vineyards, and to celebrate the long history of grape growing, which dates back to the 1850s. The public is invited to attend screenings at the following locations on Saturday, July 17:

- Buccia Vineyard Winery and B&B, 518 Gore Rd., Conneaut, OH 44030 at 5 p.m.
- Folck Winery, 6843 N. Urbana-Lisbon Rd., Mechanicsburg, OH 43044 at 2 p.m.
- Gideon Owen Wine Company, 3845 E. Wine Cellar Rd., Port Clinton, OH 43452 at 1 p.m.
- Hanover Winery, 2165 Morman Rd., Hamilton, OH 45013 at 5 p.m.
- Vinoklet Winery, 11069 Colerain Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45252 at 9 p.m.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg) is planning to use \$120 million over the next two years to help farmers reduce the agricultural pollution that leads to harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie. The biennial budget, HB110 (Oelslager), is sending \$49.3 million per fiscal year to fund ODAg's H2Ohio initiatives. "The department ... is investing an additional \$20 million from their General Revenue Fund into the H2Ohio program," ODAg spokesperson Shelby Croft told *Hannah News*.

Individuals in Toledo, Cleveland and Columbus will soon see billboards urging Ohio to "ban factory farms," environmental organization Lake Erie Advocates (LEA) announced Wednesday. The rotating ads feature a hand holding a glass of green water and messages such as, "Lake Erie is not a toilet" and "Toledo's green water starts here." The ads will appear more than 100,000 times on electronic billboards and social media platforms through early October, according to a news release from LEA.

## **ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT**

Arts nonprofit Ohio Humanities is currently accepting grant applications from nonprofits with a public humanities mission that have been affected by the pandemic. It will award a total of \$1.3 million through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, under the National Endowment for the Humanities' (NEH) Sustaining the Humanities through ARP (SHARP) program.

## **ATTORNEY GENERAL**

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost says 2022's law enforcement training pilot program could be a \$15 million harbinger of permanent annual support for peace officers' continuing education if the General Assembly and the study commission established by budget bill HB110 (Oelslager) follow through with a solution to what has become a recurrent and increasingly contentious funding problem. Introduced by the House, next year's pilot will comprise all of Ohio's broad-based support for police, sheriff and state trooper preparation and reimburse up to 50 percent of law enforcement salaries for officers receiving training. The attorney general's office will keep only \$25,000 of the \$15 million to administer the pilot program.

Attorney General Dave Yost is encouraging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) not to reinstate California's waiver under the Clean Air Act to enforce its own greenhouse gas emissions standards. Yost and the attorneys general from 15 other states recently sent a letter to USEPA Administrator Michael Regan, urging the agency to continue the policy under the Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Rule. The letter argues that the Constitution recognizes the states as equals, and does not give California "special rights" denied to every other state. The Trump administration created national standards for vehicle carbon emissions for model years 2021 through 2026, and applied them to all states without exception.

## **BALLOT ISSUES**

The "Nursing Facility Patients' Bill of Rights" was certified as a single issue by a unanimous Ohio Ballot Board vote on Monday, meaning supporters can begin collecting signatures to place the measure on the ballot. Advocates will have to collect 442,958 valid signatures to put the constitutional amendment before voters.

## **BUSINESS/CORPORATE**

Following a letter from U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) on his concerns about the company's ability to follow through on its promises, Lordstown Motors Corp. (LMC) Executive Chairwoman Angela Strand said LMC remains committed to lowering high unemployment in the Mahoning Valley by transforming it into an "electric vehicle epicenter," according to a Youngstown Business Journal report.

## **CHILDREN/FAMILIES**

With distribution of expanded Child Tax Credit (CTC) payments beginning Thursday, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown and other Democratic members of Congress held a virtual press conference Wednesday to raise awareness and push for them to be made permanent.

## **CORONAVIRUS**

Ohio will soon have a new statewide vaccine incentive program, Gov. Mike DeWine told press Tuesday, with more information coming in "a week or so." The comment came during a gaggle after the opening of the I-70 Fulton Street ramp in response to a question on Columbus Public Health's (CPH) offering \$100 gift cards to those who are receiving a first dose.

Public schools, colleges and universities will not be allowed to require students to get the COVID-19 vaccine, at least for now, under legislation signed Wednesday by Gov. Mike DeWine. Under HB244 (Lampton-White), originally written to address education for children from military families, public schools and higher education institutions cannot require students to get vaccines that lack full approval from the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a category that covers COVID-19 vaccinations now being administered under emergency use authorization from the FDA. Asked why he chose to sign HB244 given how much time and effort he's spent promoting vaccination uptake in recent months, DeWine's office said the focus of the prohibition on vaccines without full approval should make the effect short-lived. Spokesman Dan Tierney also said the governor supports the original core of the bill.

A combination of unvaccinated people attending July 4 weekend events and the rise of the highly contagious Delta variant has likely led to the recent spike in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations across the state, Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Chief Medical Officer Bruce Vanderhoff said Wednesday.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Columbus Partnership will see a leadership transition at the end of 2021, with President and CEO Alex Fischer stepping down into an advisor role. He will be replaced effective Jan. 1, 2022 by Kenny McDonald, current president and CEO of One Columbus.

Ohio was ranked 10th in a CNBC "Top States for Business in 2021" report released Tuesday, retaining its position from 2019. The news site did not rank states in 2020 due to the effects of the pandemic.

## **EDUCATION**

The State Board of Education (SBOE) reviewed recently enacted school funding and policy changes in the biennial budget and other legislation Monday. The biennial budget, HB110 (Oelslager), included the Fair School Funding Plan developed by a workgroup of superintendents and treasurers convened by House Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and former Rep. John Patterson. Lawmakers also reached a compromise on report card reforms proposed in HB200 (Jones-Robinson) and SB145 (Brenner) via an amendment to HB82

(Jones-Cross), a testing bill. Ohio Department of Education (ODE) legislative director Marjorie Yano and budget chief Aaron Rausch walked the board through a high-level overview of the new school funding formula, other education policy provisions in the budget and the report card reforms in HB82; Shelby Robertson, a department accountability official, joined in the report card presentation.

The U.S. Department of Education recently released its list of high school seniors included in the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, which included three Ohio students. Ohio's scholars were Maple Buescher of Cleveland Heights High School, Aidan Finn of Saint Xavier High School, and Kasey Shao of Walnut Hills High School, with Shao receiving an award for achievement in the arts.

The State Board of Education asked Attorney General Dave Yost Tuesday to review the legality of its July 2020 resolution on racism and equity. The board also voted to name John Richard, deputy superintendent of the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), as interim superintendent of public instruction, effective Saturday, Sept. 25. Superintendent Paolo DeMaria will retire Sept. 24.

A recent report authored by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) and sponsored and commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation, has called for states and localities to develop "STEM opportunity maps" to determine which areas don't have enough science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education programs to meet the demand. In the report released Tuesday, "Call to Action for Science Education," the authoring committee additionally recommends that the states implement accountability measures based not on a single end-of-year test focusing on rote memorization, but instead "multiple and varied assessments designed to check for conceptual understanding and proficiency with science practices."

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) said Thursday it is approving Ohio's plan to use billions of dollars in COVID-19 relief funding for schools and releasing the remaining installment of \$1.4 billion. The plan addresses state efforts to help schools safely resume in-person instruction in the fall, among other topics. Ohio is getting more than \$4.4 billion in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding via the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act.

## **ELECTIONS**

Emphasizing that voter fraud is "exceedingly rare," Secretary of State Frank LaRose announced Monday that 13 non-citizens who cast a ballot in the 2020 election have been referred to Attorney General Dave Yost for investigation and potential prosecution. Another 104 non-citizens who illegally registered to vote were also referred to Yost's office, LaRose said during a press conference at the Statehouse.

Brandy Duncan is the new campaign finance director for Ohio Senate Democrats. "Originally from Alabama, I began my career as deputy finance director of the Doug Jones for Senate race in 2017. I have spent years working on local, statewide and federal races in Alabama, North Carolina and Florida," Duncan said in an email introducing herself.

## **ELECTIONS 2021**

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- The congressional campaign of Ron Hood has announced the endorsement of U.S. Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY).
- The congressional campaign of Mike Carey has announced the endorsements of Ohio Veterans United and SEAL PAC.
- The congressional campaign of Allison Russo has announced the endorsements of U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Athens Mayor Steve Patterson.

## **ELECTIONS 2022**

Sen. Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls) on Monday launched a statewide listening tour as he considers joining the field of candidates seeking to replace U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH).

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- The U.S. Senate campaign of Josh Mandel has announced the endorsement of conservative talk show host Mark Levin.

## **EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT**

Unemployment claimants with non-fraud overpayments that they received through no fault of their own can now request waivers that, if approved, would absolve the claimant from repaying those funds to the state. Money will be returned to claimants who qualify for a waiver but who previously repaid the overpayment. "Federal changes in unemployment rules, criteria and claims volume resulted in widespread overpayments of benefits across the nation," Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Matt Damschroder said. "We know that created a tremendous amount of stress for those already struggling, and these waivers will offer relief to individuals with valid unemployment claims whose overpayments were not their fault."

For the week ending July 10, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) reported 9,953 initial unemployment claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). That number is lower than last week when the department reported 10,900 jobless claims.

## **ENERGY/UTILITIES**

Gov. Mike DeWine signed Monday an overhaul of power siting decisions for renewable energy projects that gives local officials more say in whether projects go forward. Lawmakers finalized the legislation, SB52 (Reineke-McColley), in the waning days of session before summer break. Among other provisions, the bill allows county commissioners to designate areas in which construction of utility facilities for wind and solar energy would be prohibited.

The solar energy forum scheduled for the state capital Wednesday gave way to an "all-of-the-above" discussion on electric generation and the merits of photovoltaic technology versus wind turbines, gas and even coal. Sen. Rob McColley (R-Napoleon) championed SB52 (Reineke-McColley) limits on renewable projects, while Executive Director Jason Rafeld of the Utility Scale Solar Energy Coalition (USSEC) -- "neutral" on SB52's final language -- advocated for large solar arrays in Ohio's heartland. The Columbus Metropolitan Club hosted the "Sun Is Shining on Ohio Solar" panel presentation, also featuring a third speaker, Madison County Administrator Rob Slane. Executive Director Kate Bartter of Ohio State University's Sustainability Institute moderated.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) Wednesday rejected all of the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) objections to a staff negotiation that fixes 133-HB6's (Callender-Wilkin) monthly solar subsidy at \$1 per kilowatt hour (kWh) for all commercial and industrial users and 10 cents per residential customer. Commissioners set the annual billing rider for the entire \$20 million allowed by HB6 and repeal legislation.

## **FEDERAL**

President Joe Biden Thursday named Gov. Mike DeWine as a co-chair of the president's Council of Governors, one of nine governors appointed to the council for two-year terms. According to the White House, the bipartisan Council of Governors serves as "the lead forum to strengthen partnerships between the federal government and state governments to better protect our nation from threats to our homeland security and all types of hazards. The council focuses on matters of homeland security; homeland defense; civil support; synchronization and integration of state and federal military activities in the United States; and other matters of mutual interest, including those involving the National Guard. Federal-state cooperation is critical to protecting communities given the evolving challenges and threats facing our country, which range from extreme weather to domestic and international terrorism to a global pandemic. The Council of Governors will closely coordinate with the Biden-Harris administration to bolster preparedness, resilience and response on behalf of all Americans in times of need."

During her first event as president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) on Tuesday, Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley announced that her organization supports the bipartisan infrastructure framework recently proposed by President Joe Biden and a group of U.S. Senate Republicans and Democrats. Whaley -- who is scheduled to meet with Biden to discuss the infrastructure package and other priorities on Wednesday, July 14 -- said 369 mayors from all 50 states have sent a letter to congressional leaders urging them to pass an infrastructure bill as soon as possible.

President Joe Biden is scheduled to participate in a CNN town hall in Cincinnati next week, according to media reports. CNN anchor Don Lemon will moderate the live event at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, July 21. Biden is expected to discuss a wide range of issues, including COVID-19 and the economy.

## **GOVERNOR**

Calling it a "dramatic change in Ohio law," Gov. Mike DeWine on Friday, July 9 vetoed SB113 (Rulli-Johnson), which would have made changes to Ohio's fireworks laws, making it legal to discharge fireworks on certain days of the year. He also signed HB191, which names a bridge on Rt. 164 in honor of the late Rep. Don Manning.

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Tyler Wilcox of Marietta (Washington County) to the Washington State Community College Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 8, 2021 and ending Feb. 16, 2027.
- Robert M. Connelly of Dayton (Montgomery County) appointed to the Sinclair Community College Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 8, 2021 and ending Oct. 12, 2022.
- Tanner Hunt of Columbus (Franklin County) to serve as a student member on the Ohio State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 6, 2021 and ending May 13, 2023.
- Teresa J. Tanner of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the Unemployment Compensation Modernization and Improvement Council for a term beginning July 8, 2021 and ending July 7, 2023.
- Kenneth James of Chagrin Falls (Geauga County) to the East Cleveland Financial Planning and Supervision Commission for a term beginning July 8, 2021 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Guy T. Wesselkamper of Montgomery (Hamilton County) reappointed to the Real Estate Appraiser Board for a term beginning July 8, 2021 and ending June 30, 2024.
- Donna L. Hanly of Galena (Delaware County) to the Board of Nursing for a term beginning July 8, 2021 and ending Dec. 31, 2024.
- Bryan D. Royer of Toledo (Lucas County) to the Chiropractic Loan Repayment Advisory Board for a term beginning July 8, 2021 and ending Feb. 20, 2023.
- Etta Marie Reed of Hamilton (Butler County) reappointed to the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission for a term beginning July 8, 2021 and ending June 30, 2025.
- Senena Joy Esty of Utica (Licking County) reappointed to the Ohio Standardbred Development Commission for a term beginning July 8, 2021 and ending June 30, 2025.
- Bill W. Dingus of South Point (Lawrence County) reappointed to the Transportation Review Advisory Council for a term beginning



July 8, 2021 and ending June 29, 2026.

## **GUNS**

The bicameral Gun Violence Prevention Caucus, co-chaired by Rep. Jessica Miranda (D-Cincinnati) and Sen. Cecil Thomas (D-Cincinnati), held its second meeting virtually Monday, hearing from Hamilton County Sheriff Charmaine McGuffey regarding her views on what is needed to reduce gun violence in the state.

## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Ohio is getting a new, state-of-the-art psychiatric hospital despite COVID-19's challenge to skilled labor. Workers joined the DeWine administration Tuesday for a "topping off" ceremony at Twin Valley Behavioral Healthcare's (TVBH) existing site in the state capital, where participants signed an I-beam and watched a mammoth construction crane drop the two-ton structure into place.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

Xavier University (XU) has completed a four-year capital campaign that brought in \$257 million, surpassing the initial \$250 million goal.

Ohio State University (OSU) announced Monday it is working with community partners to bring on a full-time social worker dedicated to helping housing-vulnerable people in the off-campus area. The hiring is one of several university initiatives meant to support the neighborhoods and residents surrounding Ohio State's campus. Beginning this summer, a social worker from Southeast Healthcare will work in the off-campus area, with a special emphasis on North High Street, to provide outreach and offer resources and support to people who are homeless, housing insecure or in need of other assistance.

New research from Bowling Green State University (BGSU) shows the effect, at least among college students, of insufficient or poor-quality sleep on a person's stress level and diet. Mary-Jon Ludy, as well as her collaborators Wan Shen and HeeSoon Lee, all professors in the College of Health and Human Services, were part of a worldwide team examining how the three factors are connected. BGSU said the project had been in the works for a while, but researchers needed to pivot and factor in the effect of COVID-19, both on the research methodology and on how students fared during the pandemic.

Starting fall 2021, most West Virginia residents will qualify for in-state tuition for courses taken on Ohio University (OU) campuses, the school announced Wednesday. "This state reciprocity agreement is wonderful news for Ohio University and prospective students in our region," OU President Hugh Sherman said. "While this partnership will certainly help expand enrollment at OU, more importantly it will help meet the region's workforce needs and bring additional financial resources to the state of Ohio."

Ohio University (OU) announced this week it has suspended the Beta Chapter of the Delta Tau Delta fraternity for four years, citing multiple student code of conduct violations. Through OU's internal investigation process, the group was found responsible for nine violations, including a hazing violation of coerced consumption. Additionally, the fraternity was found to have provided false information to university officials; sold, distributed or furnished alcohol; furnished alcohol to intoxicated persons; and engaged in disruptive conduct, among other violations.

## **JUDICIAL**

The Ohio Supreme Court is accepting public comment until Thursday, Aug. 26 on amendments that would add "Child Welfare Law" to the fields of law subject to specialization designation in Ohio. The amendments, which can be found online at <https://tinyurl.com/6u546tcy>, would define "Child Welfare Law" as the practice of law representing children, parents or the government in all child protection proceedings.

## **MARIJUANA/HEMP**

The Ohio Board of Pharmacy has awarded a medical marijuana dispensary certificate of operation to Strawberry Fields, located at 2950 E. Main St. in Columbus. There are now 54 dispensaries operating under the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program.

Legislation completely legalizing the cultivation, distribution, sale and use of marijuana for adults age 21 and older will be introduced in the coming days, Rep. Casey Weinstein (D-Hudson) told *Hannah News* on Thursday. The primary cosponsors of the bill are Weinstein and Rep. Terrence Upchurch (D-Cleveland). "This is full-on legalization. ... It's comprehensive," Weinstein said. "The reason I'm doing it is because we are at an inflection point."

## **MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM**

Paramount Advantage, the Toledo-based Medicaid managed care organization that lost out on a new state contract in the latest round of bidding, sued Tuesday in Franklin County Common Pleas Court to overturn the Ohio Department of Medicaid's (ODM) decision. Paramount was one of two incumbent plans left out of the latest awards. Buckeye Community Health Plan's bid for a new contract was left in limbo, as ODM deferred a decision based on state litigation against parent company Centene, though that was recently settled. ODM said Tuesday nothing has changed about the status of Buckeye's case.

## **MILITARY AFFAIRS**

Major General and former U.S. congressman Steve Stivers joined Lt. Gov. Jon Husted and Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS) Director Deborah Ashenurst Friday to call on employers to adopt and maintain workplace policies supporting members of the military reserve and Ohio National Guard. Stivers, Maj. Gen. Ashenurst and Husted, who serves as deputy commander-in-chief of

state forces under the Ohio Constitution, gathered with members of Ohio ESGR (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve) in the state capital to promote employment practices that accommodate and honor Ohioans' commitment to their state and country.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

With an unidentified ailment causing songbirds to suffer and die across the state, officials with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) are urging Ohioans to take steps to protect wild birds and poultry. Blue jays, common grackles, American robins, European starlings and house sparrows are the most common species being reported with the illness, ODNR communications specialist Jamey Emmert told *Hannah News* in an interview.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is giving organizations more time to apply for \$50,000 in Recreational Trails Program grants to build new Storybook Trails throughout Ohio. The new deadline to apply for the funding is Friday, Aug. 13, according to a news release from ODNR.

Gov. Mike DeWine and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted highlighted the importance of protecting Lake Erie and its fishery during the 41st Governor's Fish Ohio Day. DeWine and Husted were joined by Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Director Mary Mertz and other leaders from the conservation community to commemorate the annual event, according to a news release from the governor's office.

Lake Erie advocate Dave Spangler has been posthumously inducted into the Ohio Natural Resources Hall of Fame by Gov. Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Director Mary Mertz. The presentation of the state's highest conservation honor was made during the Governor's Fish Ohio Day celebration at the Lake Erie Shores & Islands Welcome Center in Port Clinton, according to a news release from ODNR.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources' (ODNR) efforts to improve the visitor experience at state parks has earned national recognition. The Ohio State Parks system was named a 2021 National Gold Medal Award finalist by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), according to a news release from ODNR. The award honors park systems across the country that demonstrate excellence, innovation and a strong sense of community.

The Seventh Annual Ohio Women's Outdoor Adventures (OWOA) weekend will kick off on Friday, Sept. 17 and run through Sunday, Sept. 19 at Salt Fork State Park, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). The event combines boating, fishing and outdoor skills with other activities focused on nature and conservation activities, ODNR said in a news release.

The DeWine administration has announced the state's intent to designate portions of Paint Creek and its tributaries as Ohio's 16th state scenic river. "We are proud that Ohio has the first and oldest scenic rivers program in the nation, and the addition of the Paint Creek and some of its tributaries as the state's 16th scenic river system only strengthens our commitment to that program," Gov. Mike DeWine said in a news release. "The Paint Creek system will provide excellent opportunities for people of all ages to enjoy one of Ohio's most natural river corridors."

## **PEOPLE**

The former executive director of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association (OPAA), John Murphy, died Thursday, July 8. He was 80. Murphy, a graduate of the Capital University Law School in 1972, began his legal career in the Franklin County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. He then spent 37 years with OPAA, retiring in 2017.

Leo Almeida has joined the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) as the Ohio government relations director, the organization announced Tuesday.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

The Ohio State Highway Patrol announced Rev. Philip A. Hurlbert has been appointed as state chaplain by Patrol Superintendent Col. Richard S. Fambro. In his role, Hurlbert will oversee the chaplaincy program.

## **REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT**

The Equal Districts Coalition, a group of more than 20 Ohio advocacy organizations engaged in the 2021 redistricting process, has launched a new video series to document the effects of gerrymandering in Ohio. The first video in the series of "Real Gerrymandering Stories" features Cincinnati resident Mindy Nagel, whose house is split in half by two different congressional districts, according to a news release from the coalition. The east side of Nagel's property is in the 1st Congressional District, while the west side is in the 2nd Congressional District.

A legal dispute over redistricting records is heading to mediation, according to the Ohio Supreme Court. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio policy strategist Collin Marozzi recently sued the Ohio House, alleging lawmakers failed to timely fulfill his public records requests relating to the Ohio Redistricting Commission.

## **STATE GOVERNMENT**

Sixteen items were deferred in Monday's Controlling Board hearing, while the remaining 119 were approved. Those included one request by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) that was approved after a hold by Rep. Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton). ODE had requested approval to waive competitive selection in an amount up to \$850,000 in both FY22 and FY23, as part of renewing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) regarding the English Language

Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century.

## **TAXATION**

Lower income Black majority neighborhoods are regularly overvalued for property tax assessments while higher income White majority neighborhoods are regularly undervalued, according to a recently released report commissioned by Franklin County Auditor and former state Rep. Michael Stinziano. In spring of last year, Stinziano reached out to the Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University (OSU) to review the county's appraisal system and to make recommendations to address the county's appraisal system and to make recommendations to address the negative effects of historical policies, such as redlining, and any current policies that marginalize communities of color.

## **TECHNOLOGY/AEROSPACE**

The "Ohio Personal Privacy Act" (OPPA) would give Ohioans a new set of rights in regard to information collected by certain businesses, sponsoring Reps. Rick Carfagna (R-Westerville) and Thomas Hall (R-Middletown) said during a Tuesday press conference. The bill was introduced Monday as HB376. The legislators were joined at the announcement by Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, InnovateOhio Deputy Director Carrie Kuruc and CyberOhio Advisory Board Chair Kirk Herath. It follows around a year of work, including six months of interested party meetings, and has eight co-sponsors so far. Hall said he thought there could be widespread and bipartisan consensus on the bill during the legislative process as well.

## **TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE**

Gov. Mike DeWine, Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther and Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Director Jack Marchbanks announced the forthcoming opening of a new Fulton Street ramp to I-70 East in downtown Columbus Tuesday. The development was recognized for improving traffic, better connecting the Southern part of the city to downtown and increasing access to Nationwide Children's Hospital (NCH).

## **WORKFORCE**

Businesses can now provide feedback on the state's In-Demand Jobs List, as the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation (OWT), InnovateOhio and Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) collaborated on a survey that is live at [topjobs.ohio.gov/survey](http://topjobs.ohio.gov/survey). The survey offers a "simple user experience," according to a release, so businesses of all sizes can offer input on the current and future in-demand jobs in a matter of minutes.

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