

OHIO PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Bill Information

HB3 AISHA'S LAW - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE *(BOYD J, CARRUTHERS S)*

To add domestic violence circumstances to the offenses of aggravated murder and endangering children, to establish local domestic violence high risk teams, and to require law enforcement officers to utilize a qualified lethality assessment screening tool to refer high risk victims to a local team.

CURRENT STATUS

12/2/2020 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, Senate Judiciary, (Second Hearing)

HB27 PUBLIC MOTOR VEHICLE LIABILITY *(INGRAM C)*

To modify political subdivision liability for an employee's negligent operation of a motor vehicle.

CURRENT STATUS

3/19/2019 - House Civil Justice, (Third Hearing)

HB48 LOCAL GOVT ROAD IMPROVEMENT FUND *(GREENSPAN D)*

To provide for a new Local Government Road Improvement Fund for local governments to fund road improvements.

CURRENT STATUS

2/12/2019 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HB51 UNDIVIDED HIGHWAY RUMBLE STRIPS *(GINTER T)*

To require the Ohio Department of Transportation to install rumble strips along the center line for all two-way, undivided state highways with a speed limit exceeding 45 miles per hour, as a part of specified highway projects.

CURRENT STATUS

12/11/2019 - Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce, (Second Hearing)

HB54 LGF TAX REVENUE INCREASE *(CERA J, ROGERS J)*

To increase the proportion of state tax revenue allocated to the Local Government Fund from 1.66% to 3.53% beginning July 1, 2019.

CURRENT STATUS

2/12/2019 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means



HB78 PREVAILING WAGE-PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS *(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

12/11/2019 - House Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)



HB92 VOTE ON COUNTY SALES TAX *(ANTANI N, SMITH J)*

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

CURRENT STATUS

3/13/2019 - House State and Local Government, (First Hearing)



HB93 PUBLIC TRANSIT INVESTMENT *(SKINDELL M, UPCHURCH T)*

To make appropriations related to public transportation.

CURRENT STATUS

3/5/2019 - Referred to Committee House Finance



HB116 TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH *(BRINKMAN T)*

To make an appropriation related to transportation planning and research.

CURRENT STATUS

12/1/2020 - House Finance, (First Hearing)



HB148 YIELD TO PARALLEL PARKERS *(BRINKMAN T)*

To require drivers to yield the right of way to any other vehicle that is parking in or exiting an angled or parallel parking space on a public road.

CURRENT STATUS

4/2/2019 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (First Hearing)

HB187 TAX ISSUES-AUGUST *(MERRIN D, WIGGAM S)*

To prohibit local tax-related proposals from appearing on an August special election ballot.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

4/10/2019 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government

HB202 ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE *(SMITH K, WEINSTEIN C)*

To establish the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Study Committee.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

12/1/2020 - **REPORTED OUT AS AMENDED**, House Transportation and Public Safety, (Sixth Hearing)

HB295 ELECTRIC SCOOTERS *(HOOPS J)*

To establish requirements governing low-speed electric scooters.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

2/12/2020 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED & REPORTED OUT**, Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce, (Sixth Hearing)

HB309 ASSAULT-TRANSIT OPERATOR *(DENSON S, PERALES R)*

To increase the penalty for assault when the victim is an operator of an Ohio transit system bus or rail car; to authorize Ohio transit systems to post a sign regarding abuse or assault of staff; and to increase the penalty for evading payment of the known fares of a public transportation system.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

2/20/2020 - House Criminal Justice, (First Hearing)

HB369 SEXUAL, GENDER DISCRIMINATION *(HILLYER B, SKINDELL M)*

To enact the Ohio Fairness Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, to add mediation as an informal method that the Ohio Civil Rights Commission may use, and to uphold existing religious exemptions under Ohio's Civil Rights Law.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

11/19/2020 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, House Civil Justice, (Third Hearing)

HB382 PROHIBIT INCOME TAX-MUNICIPAL NONRESIDENTS *(JORDAN K)*

To prohibit municipal corporations from levying an income tax on nonresidents' compensation for personal services or on net profits from a sole proprietorship owned by a nonresident.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

11/6/2019 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means

HB384 PERMITTING STOP SIGN REQUESTS *(BOGGS K, LELAND D)*

To permit a local resident, neighborhood association, or neighborhood organization to request the erection of a stop sign at an intersection and to support a request for a lower prima-facie speed limit on certain streets and highways.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

6/2/2020 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (Second Hearing)

HB468 HANDHELD ELECTRONIC DEVICE WHILE DRIVING *(LIGHTBODY M)*

To alter the law governing the use of a handheld electronic wireless communications device while driving.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

5/19/2020 - **BILL AMENDED**, House Transportation and Public Safety, (Second Hearing)

HB499 MOTOR FUEL TESTING PROGRAM *(KELLY B, LANG G)*

To authorize a county to implement a motor fuel quality testing program.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

5/19/2020 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (First Hearing)

HB501 ANIMAL-DRAWN VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS *(WIGGAM S, KICK D)*

To clarify the law governing slow-moving vehicles and to revise the lighting and reflective material requirements applicable to animal-drawn vehicles.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

12/8/2020 - **PASSED BY HOUSE**; Vote 74-11

HB510 CRIMINAL PENALTIES - VEHICLE SAFETY *(PATTON T)*

To increase the criminal penalties associated with failing to secure a load on a vehicle.

CURRENT STATUS

3/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Criminal Justice

HB546 REGISTRATION FEES - ELECTRIC VEHICLES (MILLER J, WEINSTEIN C)

To alter the definitions of "plug-in electric motor vehicle" and "hybrid motor vehicle" under the motor vehicle law and to halve the additional registration fees for those two types of motor vehicles.

CURRENT STATUS

11/17/2020 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (Second Hearing)

HB550 MOTORCYCLE SAFETY EDUCATION (HOOPS J)

To make changes to the laws related to the motorcycle safety and education program.

CURRENT STATUS

11/10/2020 - **REPORTED OUT**, House Transportation and Public Safety, (Third Hearing)

HB566 INCREASE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND DISTRIBUTION (ROGERS J, CROSSMAN J)

To increase the percentage of revenue to the General Revenue Fund distributed to the Local Government Fund and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

5/5/2020 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HB570 OPEN BIDDING DURING COVID-19 (BOGGS K)

To allow a county to purchase public health-related items and communication equipment without competitive bidding, solicit bids electronically, and open bids during a meeting held electronically during the period of the emergency declared by Executive Order 2020-01D, issued on March 9, 2020, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

12/16/2020 - House State and Local Government, (First Hearing)

HB581 ADDRESS COVID-19 CONCERNS (CALLENDER J)

To address immediate concerns related to COVID-19.

CURRENT STATUS

5/5/2020 - Referred to Committee House Health

HB582 MAKE APPROPRIATIONS, REAPPROPRIATIONS *(CALLENDER J)*

To make appropriations for the biennium ending June 30, 2021, and capital reappropriations for the biennium ending June 30, 2022.

CURRENT STATUS

5/5/2020 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HB593 REQUIRED PAID LEAVE - COVID-19 *(BOYD J, BOGGS K)*

To require paid leave for an employee who is unable to work due to quarantine or mandatory isolation, to create a grant program to compensate contract workers who cannot perform services during public health emergencies, to make an appropriation, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

12/1/2020 - House Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)

HB600 AMBULANCE LICENSE EXPANSION *(BLAIR G, O'BRIEN M)*

To authorize a person who has had a valid commercial driver's license to drive an ambulance during the state of emergency due to COVID-19 and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

5/5/2020 - Referred to Committee House Transportation and Public Safety

HB601 MATHEW'S LAW *(PERALES R)*

To enact Matthew's Law, requiring public buildings to have at least one rest room facility with an adult changing station and authorizing an income tax credit for installation.

CURRENT STATUS

6/9/2020 - House State and Local Government, (First Hearing)

HB606 CIVIL IMMUNITY - COVID-19 TRANSMISSION *(GRENDALL D)*

To grant civil immunity to a person who provides services for essential businesses and operations for injury, death, or loss that was caused by the transmission of COVID-19 during the period of emergency declared by Executive Order 2020-01D, issued on March 9, 2020.

CURRENT STATUS

9/14/2020 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**

HB609 TEMPORARY TAX AMNESTY PROGRAM *(WEST T)*

To require the Tax Commissioner to administer a temporary amnesty program from August 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, with respect to delinquent state taxes and fees, and to repeal Section 1 of this act on January 1, 2021.

CURRENT STATUS

12/17/2020 - Senate Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)

HB615 PROTECTIVE BARRIERS - SCHOOL BUSES *(SOBECKI L, MILLER J)*

To authorize the installation of protective barriers in school buses, to require the Director of Public Safety to adopt rules related to the barriers, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

5/26/2020 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (First Hearing)

HB671 PUBLIC HEALTH ORDER LIMITS *(ABRAMS C, STEPHENS J)*

To establish limits on certain public health orders issued by boards of health and the Department of Health, to prohibit a licensing authority from taking disciplinary action against a licensee for engaging in permitted activities during a pandemic, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

6/9/2020 - House State and Local Government, (Fourth Hearing)

HCR17 EXPAND SNAP TO STRIKERS *(SOBECKI L, RUSSO A)*

Urging Congress to expand Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligibility to include the households of striking workers.

CURRENT STATUS

2/11/2020 - House Health, (First Hearing)

HCR21 OHIO LOVES TRANSIT DAY *(LEPORE-HAGAN M, GREENSPAN D)*

To declare February 14, 2020, as "Ohio Loves Transit Day" and encourage all Ohioans to participate in the events taking place across Ohio during the week of and on February 14, 2020, to celebrate the importance of public transit in Ohio.

CURRENT STATUS

1/28/2020 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (First Hearing)

HCR31 DECLARE RACISM PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS *(HOWSE S, CRAWLEY E)*

To declare racism a public health crisis and to ask the Governor to establish a working group to promote racial equity in Ohio.

CURRENT STATUS

6/3/2020 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government

SB132 GAS TAX-LOCAL GOVERNMENT ALLOCATION *(WILLIAMS S)*

To modify the amount of revenue derived from any increase in the motor fuel tax rate that is allocated to local governments and to change the manner in which that revenue is divided between municipal corporations, counties, and townships.

CURRENT STATUS

5/1/2019 - Referred to Committee Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce

SB134 PASSING SCHOOL BUSES *(GAVARONE T)*

To make changes to the law governing passing a school bus, to create a new offense for vehicular homicide and vehicular assault related to improperly passing a stopped school bus, to make an appropriation, and to designate this the School Bus Safety Act.

CURRENT STATUS

5/19/2020 - House Criminal Justice, (First Hearing)

SB285 DISTRACTED DRIVING *(O'BRIEN S, KUNZE S)*

To revise the laws relative to distracted driving and the use of an electronic wireless communications device while driving.

CURRENT STATUS

9/22/2020 - Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs, (Third Hearing)

SB291 ELECTRIC VEHICLE FEES *(LEHNER P, HOTTINGER J)*

To provide for the proration of the plug-in electric and hybrid motor vehicle registration fees.

CURRENT STATUS

5/6/2020 - Referred to Committee Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce

SB293 OPEN MEETINGS LAW COMPLAINTS *(MANNING N, BLESSING III L)*

To create a procedure within the Court of Claims to hear complaints alleging a violation of the Open Meetings Law.

CURRENT STATUS

11/10/2020 - House Civil Justice, (First Hearing)

SB299 REQUIRE PAID LEAVE (CRAIG H)

To require paid leave for an employee who is unable to work due to quarantine or mandatory isolation, to create a grant program to compensate contract workers who cannot perform services during public health emergencies, to make an appropriation, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

5/6/2020 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance

SB307 SALES TAX EXEMPTION-PPE (GAVARONE T)

To authorize a temporary sales and use tax exemption for personal protective equipment and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

6/9/2020 - Senate Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)

SB308 CIVIL LIABILITY-EMERGENCY SERVICES (HUFFMAN M)

To revise the law governing immunity from civil liability and professional discipline for health care providers during disasters or emergencies, to provide qualified civil immunity to service providers providing services during and after a government-declared disaster, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

6/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Civil Justice

SB310 FEDERAL COVID FUNDING (DOLAN M)

To provide for the distribution of some federal coronavirus relief funding to local subdivisions, to make an appropriation, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

12/17/2020 - , (Third Hearing)

SB322 NON-RECOURSE CIVIL LITIGATION ADVANCES (WILSON S)

To amend the law regarding the non-recourse civil litigation advance business.

CURRENT STATUS

6/10/2020 - Referred to Committee Senate Judiciary

SB348 LOCAL BOARDS OF HEALTH *(SCHAFER T, ROEGNER K)*

To prohibit local boards of health from using certain threatening words in notifications to the public, to allow local boards of health to reject Department of Health orders during an emergency, to allow health care professionals who serve on a board of health to receive continuing education credit, and to change the makeup of local boards of health.

CURRENT STATUS

9/1/2020 - Referred to Committee Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid

SB350 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION VOUCHERS FOR STUDENTS *(BRENNER A)*

To prohibit school districts from providing vouchers for public transportation to students enrolled in grades kindergarten through eight for the 2020-2021 school year.

CURRENT STATUS

11/17/2020 - Senate Education, (Fourth Hearing)

SJR3 REQUIRE SUPERMAJORITY-INCOME TAX INCREASE *(BURKE D)*

Proposing to enact Section 7 of Article XII of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to require that any increase in income tax rates be approved by a supermajority of the membership of each house of the General Assembly.

CURRENT STATUS

6/9/2020 - **REPORTED OUT**, Senate Ways and Means, (Sixth Hearing)

Week in Review

Friday, Dec. 11, 2020

ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

The Big 10 Conference Administrators Council on Wednesday voted to eliminate the minimum-game requirement for participation in the 2020 Big 10 Football Championship Game, meaning Ohio State University (OSU) will play Northwestern University for the conference title.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Attorney General Dave Yost Thursday filed an amicus brief in a lawsuit filed by the Texas attorney general against four swing states in the U.S. Supreme Court, with Yost asking the Court to take up the case to resolve a question over judicial and executive actions in presidential elections while also urging justices to reject the remedy Texas is seeking. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton filed the lawsuit in the U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday, asking the Court to block the votes cast in Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, accusing the states of making unlawful changes to their election policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a separate brief, Yost asked the Court to take the case, but not necessarily to support the Texas claims. Yost said the states need the Court to decide whether the Electors Clause of the U.S. Constitution permits state courts and executive officials to alter rules by which presidential elections are conducted. Yost argued that the clause is clear that the power to regulate election rules lies strictly with state legislatures. He added that the relief Texas seeks "would undermine a foundational premise of our federal system: the idea that states are sovereigns, free to govern themselves."

Facebook Inc. has been illegally stifling competition to protect its monopoly power for years, Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost and 48

other attorneys general say in a new lawsuit. The lawsuit alleges that, over the last decade, the social networking giant illegally acquired competitors in a predatory manner and cut services to smaller firms that threatened its power, depriving users of the benefits of competition and reducing privacy protections and services along the way -- all in an effort to boost its bottom line through increased advertising revenue.

The Ohio Attorney General's Office announced the single-day arrest of 14 men during a human trafficking sting in Liberty Township (Trumbull County). Sunday's operation targeted men seeking to buy sex over the Internet.

FY21-22 CAPITAL APPROPRIATIONS

Budget Director Kim Murnieks outlined broad plans before both finance committees this week for a \$2 billion capital budget, with new funding for school and public works construction on top of that provided in SB4 (Rulli-Kunze) earlier this year, \$50 million for local jail projects, plus hundreds of millions of dollars for higher education, prisons and parks. The capital bill is expected to be formally introduced next week.

The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission and Ohio Public Works Commission are in line for \$300 million and \$280 million, respectively, on top of \$300 million and \$255 million they received in SB4. Murnieks also said the Office of Budget and Management (OBM) expects the state will be well below the 5 percent cap on debt service -- and likely below 4 percent -- even with the additional borrowing needed for the proposal.

FY20-21 BUDGET

Sales tax collections beat estimates by nearly \$40 million in November, while income taxes were about on target, the Office of Budget and Management (OBM) reported in preliminary revenue figures Monday. Tax collections were up 2.3 percent or \$46.3 million in November and are ahead by 3.8 percent or \$393.5 million so far this fiscal year.

FY22-23 BUDGET

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls) said in a Zoom budget forum hosted by G2G Consulting that, in addition to education funding, the first priorities will obviously have to be addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring that the budget is balanced at the end of FY21. However, if he could "suspend reality" and assume everything will be under control next spring, priorities would include avoiding raising taxes on anyone, funding the H2Ohio water quality initiative and funding services that will help enhance Ohioans' quality of life -- pointing specifically to medical services, environmental improvements, child care and economic relief for small businesses.

CORONAVIRUS

Ohio is expected to begin its first phase of vaccine distribution on or around Dec. 15, Gov. Mike DeWine said Friday. During his COVID-19 briefing, DeWine outlined details of "Phase 1A," in which priority for the vaccine will be given to EMS responders, health care workers and personnel who routinely care for COVID-19 patients, residents and staff at nursing homes, assisted living facilities and psychiatric hospitals, as well as those who live in group home settings such as some veterans and people with mental illnesses.

On Monday, Gov. Mike DeWine said that the state is seeing somewhat of a leveling of COVID-19 cases in the state, but said it is still too early to say whether the state is flattening the curve once again after experiencing a spike over the past month. He attributed the leveling off to his administration's masking order and the current curfew which shuts down most businesses between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. The latter order, which had been due to expire later this week, was extended until Jan. 2, 2021.

As Gov. Mike DeWine explained in his Monday briefing, the Ohio Department of Health's (ODH) Bureau of Infectious Disease Tuesday cleared the backlog of pending COVID-19 files that dated back to Nov. 1, causing a one-day spike in cases of 25,721. Included in these numbers are the results from approximately 13,000 cases that were part of the report backlog.

Gov. Mike DeWine was joined by 12 medical professionals from around the state at Thursday's briefing, offering what he called "a blunt appeal" for Ohioans to follow safety protocols during the holidays. The next three weeks represent a "very crucial" period for the state, he said, with ODH reporting 11,738 new COVID-19 cases -- the fourth-highest daily increase -- and 111 deaths. Hospitalizations also increased by 452 since Wednesday, with 31 new ICU admissions.

The holiday "Stay Safe Ohio" protocols include standard activities, such as wearing masks, social distancing, washing hands and working from home when possible. The medical professionals also urged Ohioans not to eat or drink with anyone outside their household, limit travel and keep attendance at weddings and funerals minimal through usage of virtual viewing. DeWine also announced an extension of the 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew until Jan. 2, 2021, while saying ODH would provide a variance for certain professional athletic events.

A new national Quinnipiac Poll released Wednesday found 33 percent of respondents don't think they would be willing to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine if it is approved, while 61 percent said they would be willing to be vaccinated. Asked how quickly they would be willing to get a vaccine once it is approved, 37 percent said as soon as possible, while 41 percent said they would wait a few months, and 20 percent said they would never get it.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Gov. Mike DeWine's administration announced Monday the approval of assistance for 16 projects that are expected to create 4,183 new jobs and retain 1,051 jobs statewide. During its monthly meeting, the Ohio Tax Credit Authority (TCA) reviewed economic

development proposals brought by JobsOhio and its regional partners. The projects are expected to collectively result in more than \$240 million in new payroll and spur more than \$864 million in investments across Ohio.

ECONOMY

For the week ending Dec. 5, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) reported 36,327 initial unemployment claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). That number is nearly 9,000 more than was reported last week and is the highest number of weekly jobless claims reported since July. The total number of initial jobless claims filed in Ohio over the last 38 weeks (1,969,894) was more than the combined total of those filed during the last four years, according to a news release from ODJFS.

EDUCATION

State Board of Education President Laura Kohler, Superintendent Paolo DeMaria and Renee Willis, superintendent of Richmond Heights City Schools, discussed the development and implications of the board's summer resolution on racism and equity during a virtual Cleveland City Club forum Friday. The board voted in July to adopt the "Resolution to condemn racism and to advance equity and opportunity for black students, indigenous students and students of color" in the wake of nationwide protests over racism and police conduct sparked by the death of George Floyd. The resolution inspired lengthy debate and drew public criticism and praise at board meetings for months.

While K-12 school funding overhaul HB305 (Cupp-Patterson) passed the House with broad bipartisan support, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls) said the bill is promising but likely lacks the clarity and urgency necessary to pass the upper chamber during the lame duck session. This comment came during a Zoom budget forum hosted by G2G Consulting that also included House Assistant Minority Leader Kristin Boggs (D-Columbus) and Ohio Office of Budget and Management (OBM) Director Kimberly Murnieks. Murnieks said Gov. Mike DeWine has been clear that he is committed to wraparound services for students, and those programs will be funded in some form in the administration's budget recommendation.

Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard), one of many co-sponsors for the Senate version of the Cupp-Patterson school funding plan, said questions about the full price tag and the lost work time from the pandemic are factors in the chamber's deliberations on it, but she expressed optimism about its prospects. Kunze joined Reps. John Patterson (D-Jefferson) and Phil Robinson (D-Solon) and school finance expert Howard Fleeter at a Cleveland City Club virtual forum Monday to discuss the plan, passed by the House in HB305 (Cupp-Patterson) and pending in the Senate Finance Committee as SB376.

The Franklin County judge overseeing remaining assets for the defunct Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) has approved the state's proposal to settle claims against the former school treasurer in exchange for her assistance in the case against school founder William Lager. Attorney General Dave Yost's office filed a motion last month for approval of a settlement with Michele Smith that would dismiss claims against her and her bonding company in exchange for her assistance in helping the state press its claims against Lager.

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute unveiled a new report Thursday suggesting Ohio's current school funding system may not still be unconstitutional. The Ohio Supreme Court ruled 23 years ago in *DeRolph v. State of Ohio* that the state's school funding system violated Section Six, Article II of the Ohio Constitution which has a "thorough and efficient" clause. However, the report's author, Aaron Churchill, research director for the Fordham Institute, questioned whether it is still fair to characterize Ohio's current funding arrangement as unconstitutional given all the changes that have taken place over two decades.

ELECTIONS 2020

Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard) has won another term after a recount confirmed her victory and her opponent, Democrat Crystal Lett, conceded. The Franklin County Board of Elections showed a lead of less than 0.5 percent when it finished with its canvass of ballots, leading to the recount.

ELECTIONS 2021

Sen. Cecil Thomas (D-Cincinnati) has pulled paperwork to run for Cincinnati mayor, and confirmed his intention to several media outlets. Thomas, who is in his last term in the Ohio Senate, is seeking the office held by Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley, who cannot run again due to term limits. Cincinnati Councilman David Mann and retired Cincinnati firefighter Raffel Prohpett have also announced campaigns.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

The national unemployment rate dropped from 6.9 percent in October to 6.7 percent in November as the economy added 245,000 jobs, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Friday. BLS said the improvements in the labor market reflect the continued resumption of economic activity that had been curtailed due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and efforts to contain it. However, the pace of improvement in the labor market has moderated in recent months. In November, notable job gains occurred in transportation and warehousing, professional and business services and health care. Employment declined in government and retail trade.

ENERGY

The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) is turning to the Ohio Supreme Court in an effort to halt HB6's (Callender-Wilkin) \$170 million annual "Clean Air Fund" charge on all electric accounts, saying the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) was "unjust and

unreasonable" to approve ratepayer subsidies for nuclear and solar generators in light of mounting administrative and legal actions targeting the bill's enactment, First Energy, its former executives, and the nuclear plants' current owner, Energy Harbor. Meanwhile, the Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) is urging the commission to widen the scope of its "corporate separation audit" of FirstEnergy for the period covering the introduction and enactment of HB6 and the subsequent ballot campaign to repeal it.

FEDERAL

President-elect Joe Biden Thursday made it official that he is nominating U.S. Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-Warrensville Heights) for secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). A release from the Biden transition team called Fudge "a leading voice for working families." She has been a representative for the 11th Congressional District for the last 12 years. According to the transition team, if confirmed, Fudge will be the first woman to lead HUD in more than 40 years and the second Black woman in history to do so.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Rep. John Rogers (D-Mentor-on-the-Lake) confirmed to the *Willoughby News Herald* that he has tested positive for COVID-19. With the positive test, Rogers joins Reps. John Patterson (D-Jefferson) and Rick Carfagna (R-Westerville) to confirm that they have the coronavirus. Media outlets have also reported that Rep. Gary Scherer (R-Circleville) has tested positive, and Rep. Steve Hambley (R-Medina) posted on social media this week that he had recovered from the virus after contracting it last month.

The House cancelled its floor sessions for Wednesday and Thursday, Dec. 9 and 10 although the Tuesday floor session proceeded. The speaker added that the House will be in session on Thursday, Dec. 17 with an "if needed" session on Wednesday, Dec. 16 remaining on the calendar. Committees are to meet.

House Democrats Tuesday tried and failed again to force a mask mandate on the chamber during Tuesday's session, after at least three lawmakers tested positive for COVID-19 recently. Rep. Paula Hicks-Hudson (D-Toledo) sought to add an amendment to SB252 (Hackett-Craig), which prohibits "fail first" coverage of drugs to treat stage four advanced metastatic cancer, but it was ruled out of order by Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima), and House Republicans backed Cupp's ruling when Hicks-Hudson appealed that ruling. SB252 (Hackett-Craig) went on to pass 81-1. In addition, the House Tuesday passed seven other bills including HB159 (Blessing) HB273 (Ryan-Lipps), HB328 (Baldrige), HB361 (Upchurch-Strahorn), HB441 (Plummer-West), HB501 (Wiggam-Kick) and SB39 (Schuring). It concurred on Senate amendments on to HB24 (Hambley-Kick) and HB412 (Clites-Ginter).

Aggravated murder convicts and defendants could be found ineligible for execution if their conduct was affected by four of the most severe mental illnesses under legislation passed by an overwhelming majority Wednesday in the Senate. The chamber voted 27-3 to approve HB136 (Hillyer) after one final amendment on the floor from Sen. John Eklund (R-Chardon), the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman, addressing the evaluations of those petitioning to be found ineligible for capital punishment under the bill. Eklund said it represented another compromise with prosecutors that gave neither him nor them all they wanted. The chamber also voted 30-0 to approve the conference report to SB9 (M. Huffman), requiring insurers to release certain health claim information to employers with 50 to 100 employees.

The Senate also passed SB234 (Brenner), HB7 (Ghanbari-Patterson), HB210 (Carruthers), HB251 (Lang-Hillyer), HB312 (Powell), HB405 (Cross), SB289 (Blessing), SB341 (Roegner), SB362 (Peterson) and SB372 (Rulli).

In his post-session interview with the press, Obhof said lawmakers and the administration have been talking for a couple of weeks about resolving concerns with Gov. Mike DeWine's veto of SB311 (McColley-Roegner), reiterating previous statements about a desire to decriminalize the health orders. Obhof said the chamber is remaining flexible in its lame-duck schedule, noting the if-needed session already on the calendar for Tuesday, Dec. 22 and pointing out that lawmakers returned the week between Christmas and New Year's Day in the previous General Assembly.

The Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee voted Wednesday to report out HB388 (A. Holmes), despite requests from the ambulance industry for further consideration of how it would be affected. The bill received a unanimous vote of those present.

In other actions, the Conference Committee on SB89 which dealt with health plan claim information accepted a report on the amended bill; the House Civil Justice Committee reported out SB276 (Roegner) which enacts the Ohio Revised Limited Liability Company Act; the House Health Committee reported out SCR5 (Schaffer) which urges Congress to enact the Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act; and SB263 (Hackett) which addresses pharmacy benefit managers; the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee reported out HB321 (Lipps-Kelly) which addresses child sexual abuse prevention; the House State and Local Government Committee reported out HB460 (Hambley-Skindell) which allows party designation for judicial candidates; the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee reported out HB46 (Greenspan) which establishes the Ohio State Government Expenditure Database; the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee reported out HB365 (Manning) which revises requirements for a chemical dependency counselor II license; the Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee reported out HB450 (Stephens) which addresses succession guidelines for fiscal officers; the House Criminal Justice Committee reported out SB312 (McColley) which deals with the Hardin County Court of Common Pleas; and HB215 (Boggs-Carfagna), the Reagan Tokes Reentry Act; the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee reported out HB458 (Rogers) which creates the University of Alabama license plate; and HB794 (Cera), a highway designation bill; the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee reported out SB380 (Hoagland) which authorizes the use of owls in the sport of falconry; HB33 (Lanese-Carruthers) which establishes animal abuse reporting requirements; HB67 (Brinkman-Kelly) which addresses continuing education for veterinarians; HB665 (Jones) which modifies laws governing agricultural societies; SR454 (Roegner) which urges Congress to eliminate the e-check

program; and HB674 (Hillyer-Becker) which revises liquor laws; the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee reported out SB383 (Johnson) which eliminates the duty to retreat; the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee reported out HB38 (Hillyer) addressing commercial credit reporting; SB362 (Peterson) which increases tax credits for insurance companies; and HB388 (A. Holmes) regarding out-of-network care; the Senate Judiciary Committee reported out HB1 (Plummer-Hicks-Hudson) which addresses intervention in lieu of conviction; and the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee reported out HB172 (Hillyer) which addresses self-storage facilities.

GOVERNOR

While he emphasized that President Donald Trump has "every right" to challenge the results of the election he lost to President-elect Joe Biden, Gov. Mike DeWine said Americans should rest assured that the U.S. electoral process is working properly. "We need to have faith. We need to have faith in our election system. We need to have faith in our judicial system. We should not, for example, criticize the president or his lawyers for going into court. They have every right to go to court, just like any other American does. Courts are by-and-large a very good adjudicator of the facts," DeWine said in a wide-ranging interview with *Hannah News*, during which he also discussed issues such as the "State of the State" address, education funding, gun policies, police reform, scandal-plagued energy subsidy law HB6 (Callender-Wilkin), sports gambling, water quality, taxes, the budget and federal pandemic relief.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Molina Healthcare announced recently the appointment of Michelle Bentzien-Purrington as executive leader and Dr. Mario San Bartolome as national medical director of the Columbus-based National Molina Healthcare Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) Innovation Center created earlier this year.

HIGHER EDUCATION

University of Dayton (UD) School of Business Administration (SBA) Dean John D. Mittelstaedt died in hospice on Tuesday, after a long battle with cancer, the university said.

Youngstown State University's (YSU) nursing department received a \$1 million donation from the Centofanti Charitable Foundation and will rename the department the James and Coralie Centofanti School of Nursing in honor of the gift.

Leadership changes are underway at Ohio State University (OSU) where President Kristina Johnson recently announced Executive Vice President and Provost Bruce McPheron had decided to step down from his role. Johnson also announced the departure of Susan Basso, senior vice president of Talent, Culture and Human Resources, and the hiring of Ayanna Howard as dean of the College of Engineering effective March 1, 2021.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

Ohio has joined an \$86.3 million nationwide settlement with Northstar Mortgage aka "Mr. Cooper" over allegations the company mismanaged tens of thousands of home loans between 2011 and 2017. Nationstar began purchasing mortgage servicing portfolios in 2012 from competitors and quickly grew into the nation's largest non-bank servicer, according to the Ohio Attorney General's Office. Of the \$86 million-plus settlement, \$79.2 million will provide direct relief to 55,814 borrowers nationally, including \$2.13 million for current or former mortgage holders in Ohio. Consumers seeking mortgage assistance and loan modifications, for instance, are due a guaranteed minimum payment of \$840. Victims of rogue third-party vendors will receive a guaranteed \$250.

IMMIGRATION

Seeking "commonsense immigration reform," a number of regional and statewide business groups announced Thursday they have formed Ohio Business for Immigration Solutions (OBIS) and are calling for bipartisan efforts from the 134th General Assembly and 117th Congress. OBIS members include chambers of commerce in Columbus, Cincinnati, Akron and other cities; Ohio Bankers League, Ohio Business Roundtable, Ohio Council for Homecare & Hospice, Ohio Grocers Association, Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association, Ohio Pharmacists Association, Ohio REALTORS, Ohio Restaurant Association, OhioX, BioOhio, Cincinnati Compass, Columbus Partnership, Eastman & Smith LTD, Greater Cleveland Partnership and Hispanic Chamber of Cincinnati USA.

INSURANCE

Kristen Berger recently joined the Ohio Insurance Institute (OII) as director of communications. Prior to joining OII, Berger was senior communications specialist at the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System. She also held the position of communications coordinator for the Ohio Insurance Agents Association, Inc. Berger also worked for the Ohio Telecom Association and as a legislative aide in the Ohio House of Representatives.

JUDICIAL

Members of the Ohio bar would be allowed to include U.S. military service in their attorney registration files with the adoption of proposed amendments to the Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio. The change would provide the Office of Attorney Services demographic data on lawyers admitted to the practice of law or registered as corporate counsel. The comment deadline is Monday, Dec. 28, 2020.

The Ohio Supreme Court is granting a major extension of its e-filing deadline from 5 p.m. to 11:59:59 p.m., effective Jan. 1, 2021. Amendments to Rules 3.02 and 3.03 of the Rules of Practice note that official business hours of the Court's Office of the Clerk will remain 8 a.m.-5 p.m., and that paper or electronic documents submitted after the close of business will be considered timely if they

otherwise comply with the rules. Those received after 5 p.m. will not be reviewed until the next day, however. Under Rule 3.03, moreover, the filing of a request for extension of time now automatically extends the period for filing a document until the Supreme Court rules on the request.

Gov. Mike DeWine Thursday appointed Karen K. Gallagher to the Williams County Court of Common Pleas, Probate and Juvenile Division, effective Dec. 31, 2020. This is weeks ahead of the term she just won in the November election where she ran unopposed to replace Judge Steven R. Bird. That term begins Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021.

Clinton County Clerk of Courts Cindy Bailey was re-elected as 2021 president of the Ohio Clerk of Courts Association (OCCA) at its annual winter conference, the association announced. Also installed were Butler County Clerk of Courts Mary Swain as first vice president, Fulton County Clerk of Courts Tracy Zuver as second vice president, Mercer County Clerk of Courts Calvin Freeman as third vice president, Holmes County Clerk of Courts Ronda Steimel as corresponding secretary, Delaware County Clerk of Courts Natalie Fravel as recording secretary and Wyandot County Clerk of Courts Ann Dunbar as treasurer.

MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM

While Ohio's Medicaid work requirements are in limbo because of the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. Supreme Court said Friday it will review cases challenging the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' approval of requirements in other states. At the outset of the DeWine administration, the federal government granted approval for Ohio to implement Medicaid work requirements. But the planned 2021 launch is up in the air because enhanced federal matching funds granted states to address the COVID-19 pandemic come with the understanding eligibility requirements for Medicaid won't change. The Supreme Court said Friday it was consolidating and accepting for review *Azar v. Gresham* and *Arkansas v. Gresham*.

The Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) said Tuesday that Gainwell Technologies was awarded the contract to serve as the fiscal intermediary as part of a larger overhaul of managed care under the DeWine administration. ODM said the vendor will allow providers to submit claims and prior authorization requests through one system rather than with each managed care organizations, streamline prior authorizations in general and provide for timely updates on the status of claims and prior authorization requests. ODM said the contract will also enable it to assess regulatory compliance, review data and track performance measures.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ohio hunters harvested 71,650 white-tailed deer during the annual gun hunting week that concluded on Sunday, Dec. 6, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife (DOW). Over the last three years, hunters checked an average of 65,566 deer during the same weeklong period, the department said.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

The JobsOhio Board of Directors discussed efforts over the year, particularly in response to the pandemic, and recognized the work of member and former Speaker Bill Batchelder, who has stepped down from the board but will serve in an emeritus role going forward. Gov. Mike DeWine was present in the virtual meeting, acknowledging Batchelder as "the father of JobsOhio" and welcoming his replacement on the board, Upper Sandusky businessman Paul Kalmbach Sr. DeWine also recognized the work of the economic development nonprofit as a whole during the pandemic.

PEOPLE

Groundwork Ohio, which advocates on early education and development of children, said it has hired Abby McMahon to the newly created position of director of policy and advocacy. McMahon previously was an attorney with the Legislative Service Commission. She has a bachelor's degree in geography from Ohio State University and law degree from the University of Cincinnati.

Alexander "P.G." Sittenfeld announced Monday he would accept a voluntary suspension from his seat on the Cincinnati City Council following his federal indictment, though he also vowed to "fight these false allegations [and] show [his] innocence."

The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) announced Tuesday that President Eric Burkland will retire at the end of the year, though he will remain active as president emeritus and leader of the OMA Educational and Industrial Development Institute. Ryan Augsburger, vice president and managing director of the OMA's public policy services, will serve as the next president. Burkland has led OMA for 31 years, according to the organization, helping "advance numerous policies to increase the competitiveness of Ohio manufacturers."

Tom Meyer, who spent 33 years in the Ohio Statehouse working for former Gov. Dick Celeste and Democrats in the Ohio Senate, passed away on Tuesday, Dec. 8 due to complications from COVID-19. According to his obituary, Meyer spent his time in the Statehouse "keeping the Republicans on their toes and helping interns learn their way. He fought to restore rights to Shawnee native tribes. He was proud to serve the people of Ohio, alongside colleagues who became family."

POLITICS

Ohio Republican leaders gathered virtually Friday to discuss the results of last month's election and look ahead to 2022 and beyond. At the meeting, Ohio Republican Party Chairwoman Jane Timken announced her intention to run for re-election as the party's chair. Numerous state leaders and committee members congratulated Timken for her work this election cycle, which saw Republican gains in the state General Assembly and President Donald Trump win Ohio by a large margin.

The "moral convulsion" that has occurred in the U.S. over the last five years -- and Joe Biden's excellent comprehension of it -- led to

the former vice president's becoming the president-elect, according to *New York Times* political and cultural commentator David Brooks. Citing Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington, Brooks said the country goes through heavy turbulence roughly every 60 years, pointing to the 1770s, 1830s, 1890s, 1960s and the present. Brooks presented a virtual talk hosted by the Capital Square Foundation (CSF).

PUBLIC SAFETY

The DeWine administration answered the May 25, 2020 police slaying of George Floyd Friday with a final law enforcement standard limiting chokeholds to incidents requiring use of deadly force to protect officers and others from serious physical injury or death. The Ohio Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Community-Police Collaborative Advisory Board also finalized work begun in September on a statewide law enforcement standard for mass protests and demonstrations to "enable Ohio's citizens to safely and peacefully exercise their constitutional rights of expression, of assembly and of freedom of the press while also ensuring public safety and the safety of ... officers."

Another state agency is now in compliance with law enforcement standards promulgated by the Ohio Community-Police Collaborative Advisory Board over five years ago. The Ohio Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Office of Criminal Justice Services announced Tuesday that the Ohio Casino Control Commission's gaming agents section has been certified for use of force, including deadly force, and agency recruitment and hiring. Also newly certified are police in Bedford (Cuyahoga County), Craig Beach (Mahoning County), Fort Recovery (Mercer County), Mount Vernon (Knox County), Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (Tuscarawas County), Port Washington (Tuscarawas County), Silver Lake (Summit County) and Waterville (Lucas County).

STATE GOVERNMENT

A Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI) rule package that would have increased fees for background checks and fingerprint searches was moved into "to be re-filed" status ahead of Monday's Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) meeting. The BCI rules would increase fees for criminal background checks from \$22 to \$30 and fees for fingerprint searches from \$5 to \$6. All other items on the agenda cleared JCARR.

Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) Executive Director Cheryl Lyman told committee members Thursday that the total dollar amount of projects under the board's purview will reach over \$3 billion by the end of FY21. Looking at the projects just from the beginning of September through the end of October, Lyman said \$47.9 million will go toward school construction projects, \$40.6 million toward state agency projects, and \$5.3 million toward cultural and arts projects.

TECHNOLOGY

Lt. Gov. Jon Husted announced Monday that 200 unique datasets and more than 100 interactive visualizations will be available to public and state decision makers through an online portal that launches this week. Husted announced DataOhio during Gov. Mike DeWine's coronavirus update on Monday, saying the goal is to have data from all state agencies on the platform, which will serve as a centralized repository. Four agencies -- the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC), the Department of Youth Services (DYS), and the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) -- will have data on the website as it goes live. It can be found at data.ohio.gov.

Lt. Gov. Jon Husted announced results from the October round of TechCred applications, saying that 246 employers were approved for funding that will lead to technology-focused credential training of 3,164 Ohioans. This now brings the program to over 15,000 credentials for the year, having already surpassed the goal of 10,000.

The Ohio Third Frontier Commission approved \$900,000 for new medical technology and other innovative products in its Tuesday meeting, including \$500,000 awarded to Ohio State University from Third Frontier's Technology Validation and Start-up Fund. The fund is focused on Ohio institutions of higher education and other nonprofit research institutions, to help demonstrate that technology is commercially viable through activities such as testing and prototyping. The ultimate goal is to license the technology to companies, according to the commission.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

The Reason Foundation moved Ohio up five spots to 13th in the group's annual rankings of state highway systems on overall cost-effectiveness and condition. According to the group, Ohio ranks 13th in overall fatality rate, 19th in structurally deficient bridges, 21st in traffic congestion, 29th in urban Interstate pavement condition, and 29th in rural Interstate pavement condition. On spending, Ohio ranks 21st in total spending per mile and 22nd in capital and bridge costs per mile.

While COVID-19 overall has reduced demand for public transit in American cities, Ohio State University (OSU) researchers found how much that demand dropped varied based on a number of factors, including location and race. Overall, demand for public transit dropped about 73 percent amid the pandemic, but the authors of the study found the reduction didn't affect all cities equally. Using activity data from a widely used public transit navigation app, they found demand for public transit dropped further in larger, coastal cities than in other parts of the country. The reason had to do with the nature of jobs in different cities and who was actually using public transportation before the pandemic, said Luyu Liu, lead author of the study and doctoral student in geography at OSU.

UTILITIES

Capital-area resident Cynthia Wingo tried for more than three years to get the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) to apply the statutory test for an "electric light company" to submetering firm Nationwide Energy Partners (NEP) but was subjected instead to

a baseless standard of the commission's own devising and denied the possibility of greater consumer protections from a fully regulated utility, the Supreme Court of Ohio ruled Wednesday, remanding the case to the PUCO for a proper application of Revised Code (R.C.) Section 4905.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) began issuing \$5 billion in dividends to Ohio employers on Thursday to ease COVID-19's impact on the state's business community and economy, bringing its total dividends this year to nearly \$8 billion. This latest rebate was announced by Gov. Mike DeWine on Oct. 28.

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