

## 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

3/10/2021 - Senate Transportation, (Fifth Hearing)

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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

3/11/2021 - House Finance, (Seventh Hearing)

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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

3/10/2021 - House Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)

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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**

3/3/2021 - House Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)

**HB157**

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

To repeal 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**

3/10/2021 - House Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)

**SB4**

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

To include emergency service telecommunicators and certain Ohio National Guard members as individuals whose residential and familial information is exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Law.

**CURRENT STATUS**

3/9/2021 - House Civil Justice, (First Hearing)

**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**

3/9/2021 - Senate Local Government and Elections, (Fourth Hearing)

**SB18**

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

To expressly incorporate changes in the Internal Revenue Code since March 27, 2020, into Ohio law and to declare an emergency.

**CURRENT STATUS**

3/9/2021 - House Ways and Means, (Fourth Hearing)

**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**

3/2/2021 - Senate Judiciary, (First Hearing)

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

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

**CURRENT STATUS**

2/24/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance

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

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

**CURRENT STATUS**

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

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

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

**CURRENT STATUS**

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

 **Week in Review**

**Friday, March 5, 2021**

**AGRICULTURE**

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) is now accepting applications for the 2021 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. "To qualify, the grants must be used to support projects that raise awareness about and increase demand for specialty crops grown in Ohio. Eligible specialty crops include fresh fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops, including

floriculture," ODAg said.

## **ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT**

A new statewide coalition representing the arts and culture community is asking House leaders to modify Ohio's tobacco taxes to help the struggling industry. In a letter to House Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and House Finance Committee Chair Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton) from more than 80 individuals and organizations, along with in-person committee testimony from Fred Bidwell, the General Assembly is being asked to make the following three changes in the budget bill, HB110 (Oelslager): adjust the methodology of the cigarette tax from a per unit basis to a percentage basis; consider all tobacco revenue not just cigarettes; and permit voters in Ohio's 14 largest counties the opportunity to vote on a similar measure should they desire to mount a levy.

A limited number of spectators will be allowed to attend the Big 10 men's and women's basketball tournaments next week, the conference announced on Thursday. The men's tournament, which will take place from Wednesday, March 10 through Sunday, March 14 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, IN will allow 8,000 attendees. The women's tournament, which runs from Tuesday, March 9 through Saturday, March 13 at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, IN will allow 2,500 fans to attend.

## **ATTORNEY GENERAL**

Attorney General Dave Yost has filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) to remove owners of the Mohican Young Star Academy in Perrysville as operators based on allegations the facility improperly restrained juveniles treated for mental illness.

The Ohio Attorney General's Office has identified the now deceased assailants in the unsolved murder of Columbus Eastmoor High School honors student Lori Nesson in 1974 through DNA evidence. Its resolution may bring closure to the family.

## **FY22-23 BUDGET**

Gov. Mike DeWine called a news conference Friday to highlight the various provisions in his proposed FY22-23 budget dealing with Ohio's foster care system, noting that Ohio's system "is too often focused on the adults rather than the children, and this simply must change." DeWine was often critical of how the system has failed children over the years and he expressed "outrage" over some of the stories his Children Services Transformation Advisory Council heard in hearings around the state. He noted that children services employees work hard but it is important to eliminate the "outliers" who are not doing a good job.

Funding for the Ohio Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Hemp Program line item should be reduced by 42 percent from FY21 to FY22, according to the agency's Redbook. While the Ohio Office of Budget and Management (OBM) estimates that \$1.7 million will be spent on the recently-created program in FY21, the executive budget proposal calls for just a little over \$1 million in each FY22 and FY23.

The General Assembly should increase state funding for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Parks and Watercraft by 7 percent over the next biennium, ODNR Director Mary Mertz said Tuesday. During her HB110 (Oelslager) testimony before the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources, Mertz said Ohioans flocked to state parks in 2020 as they sought safe methods of recreation.

Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Tuesday heard a plea from Ohio Expositions Commission Chairman Andy Doehrel and General Manager Virgil Strickler for assistance in helping the Ohio Expo Center recover from the effects of COVID-19. Doehrel called it "devastating," noting that revenue for the center dropped from just over \$17 million in 2019 to just over \$3 million in 2020. "The Ohio Expo Center has not hosted an event since March of 2020, beginning with the cancellation of the Arnold Sports Festival, which is held in part at the Expo Center, and of course, including the cancellation of the 167th Ohio State Fair last summer."

The House Thursday sent the transportation budget on to Senate. Rep. Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton), the sponsor of transportation budget HB74 and chair of the House Finance Committee, said the bill will provide \$7 billion over the next two fiscal years for the Ohio Department of Transportation to support infrastructure, highway, road and bridge construction and maintenance as well as public transportation, intermodal and more, including \$100 million for major new road construction projects. It will also provide \$1 billion to the Ohio Department of Public Safety, including an additional \$15 million/year for the Ohio State Highway Patrol. This brings the total General Revenue Fund appropriation for the patrol to \$50 million/year.

The General Assembly should eliminate sunset provisions for Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) fees that currently exist in statute, Ohio EPA Director Laurie Stevenson said Wednesday. "These fees provide \$85 million, or 50 percent of the agency's total annual revenue," Stevenson told the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources during testimony on the budget, HB110 (Oelslager).

The Ohio Development Services Agency (DSA) is proposing to create three new programs to help businesses "bridge the gap" and assist in their growth, DSA Director Lydia Mihalik told the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources on Wednesday. She is also seeking a return to the "Department of Development" name for her agency.

Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Stephanie McCloud outlined the agency's budget priorities to the House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee Wednesday, with department initiatives geared toward improving maternal and infant health outcomes and strengthening the state's lead mitigation programs.

Subcommittee members quizzed Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Kim Henderson on child care funding,

fraud in the unemployment system and effects of new federal law on child welfare during her agency's House budget hearing Thursday. Henderson gave prepared testimony to the House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee similar to that delivered a few weeks ago before the full House Finance Committee.

## **CENSUS**

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost announced he has filed a federal lawsuit to compel the U.S. Census Bureau to release population data relevant to the upcoming redistricting process. The lawsuit comes after the Census Bureau announced that the data would not be sent to the states until Sept. 30, citing delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The bureau had originally planned to deliver the data to the states by March 31.

## **CHILDREN/FAMILIES**

Ohio has one of the worst infant mortality rates in the country, ranking 42nd out of all 50 states for the highest infant mortality rate, according to 2018 Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data. Outcomes for Black newborns are even worse. Data from 2019 shows Black infants die at nearly three times the rate of White infants. In Ohio, about five White babies die per 1,000 live births, compared to over 14 Black newborns per 1,000 live births who die. Advocates from around the state gathered to discuss budgetary and legislative actions that would help address the issue during the Monday meeting of the Ohio Legislative Children's Caucus, led by co-chairs Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard) and Rep. Allison Russo (D-Upper Arlington).

## **CIVIL RIGHTS**

Sen. Nickie J. Antonio (D-Lakewood) was joined by Sen. Mike Rulli (R-Salem) and Reps. Mike Skindell (R-Lakewood) and Brett Hillyer (R-Uhrichsville) Thursday in a Zoom news conference to announce the bipartisan and bicameral reintroduction of the Ohio Fairness Act, legislation to prohibit discrimination against LGBTQ+ Ohioans.

## **CORONAVIRUS**

All of the Ohio Department of Health's (ODH) coronavirus-related public health orders will be removed when the state begins to see 50 cases per 100,000 population for two weeks, Gov. Mike DeWine announced during a statewide address Thursday evening. "I am often asked, 'Mike, when is this going to end? When can we lift the health orders?' I've consulted Dr. Vanderhoff, our department of health's medical director, and a number of epidemiologists as well as other health experts, and they tell me that now, with the vaccine, we can set realistic goals," DeWine said, indicating the goal of 50 cases per 100,000 population is reasonable.

Vaccination eligibility expanded to two new sets of groups effective Thursday, March 4, according to an announcement from Gov. Mike DeWine earlier in the week. Phase 1C includes those with certain medical conditions or in several professions, while Phase 2 includes all those ages 60 to 64. In total, he said there are around 246,000 eligible Ohioans in Phase 1C and 695,000 in Phase 2.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has provided over \$1 billion to Ohioans through food assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program, the department announced Monday. "Having access to nutritious food is critical for families and children," ODJFS Director Kimberly Henderson said. "By working with our federal partners and using our Ohio Benefits system, we have been able to increase food security during these challenging times."

The Ohio History Connection will host "Reflecting on One Year of COVID-19" on Wednesday, March 10, about a year after the state's initial declaration of a state of emergency, with panelists discussing the history of past pandemics, the importance of a science-based approach toward the disease, and barriers to rolling out the vaccine. Registration for the event is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/unu99wyy>. Attendance costs \$20, and \$5 for Ohio History Connection members.

Three weeks after Ohio Department of Health (ODH) officials realized they failed to report more than 4,000 COVID-19 deaths from late 2020, ODH Director Stephanie McCloud said the agency will no longer sacrifice accuracy for speed when releasing mortality data. ODH had been reporting Ohio Disease Reporting System (ODRS) mortality data daily, reconciling that information with verified death certificate data from the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS), she said. Going forward, ODH will use death certificate data from EDRS as the sole source of information for deaths reported on the state's COVID-19 dashboards.

Senate Republicans announced four bills Tuesday that would appropriate more than \$1.9 billion in federal funding to provide additional COVID-19 relief, building on the previous approval of more than \$2.5 billion in funding to Ohio communities and schools as a result of the pandemic. Testimony on these bills is slated to begin March 9, according to the sponsors. Companion bills were introduced in the House Tuesday as well.

More Ohioans will be able to attend events at stadiums, arenas, arts/entertainment venues and banquet facilities under new amended orders signed by Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Stephanie McCloud on Tuesday. Gov. Mike DeWine had previewed these public health order amendments previously during his coronavirus briefings.

House and Senate Republicans mounted another run at Gov. Mike DeWine's year-old emergency health order Wednesday when executive override SB22 (Johnson-McColley) hit the lower chamber and COVID-19 amnesty bill HB127 (Merrin) saw its first hearing in the House State and Local Government Committee. Rep. Derek Merrin (R-Monclova) and Sens. Terry Johnson (R-McDermott) and Robert McColley (R-Napoleon) presented committee members with sponsor testimony on their respective bills, which target the governor's COVID-19 orders in very different ways but pose a similar rebuke of DeWine's exercise of power.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Ohio placed first for bringing in new corporate facility projects per capita, according to the "Governor's Cup 2020" economic development rankings released by *Site Selection* magazine Monday. The Buckeye State was also second nationally for total projects overall, Gov. Mike DeWine's office said. It was ranked first for new projects in 2019 as well.

## **EDUCATION**

Several representatives of charter and private schools offered critiques of the Cupp-Patterson school funding proposal to a House subcommittee Tuesday, while hundreds of school districts sent regional representatives to deliver a message of support for the new funding plan. The House Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee continued to take testimony on HB1 (Callender-Sweeney), which includes a school funding plan House Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) helped to write and hopes to pass in the near future by incorporating it into the biennial budget bill before it moves to the Senate.

Nearly three years after losing its challenge in the Ohio Supreme Court to how the state determined its enrollment and funding levels, Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) was back before justices Tuesday in another dispute, asserting its right to appeal the State Board of Education's decision to claw back tens of millions of dollars in per-student funding. ECOT attorney Marion Little said the online charter school had to pursue multiple legal avenues for relief because the Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) positions on the matter changed by the day. Erik Clark, special counsel for ODE, said the school was trying to get multiple bites at the apple despite a lack of appeal rights spelled out in law.

A testing cancellation bill short-circuited by federal decisions passed the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee Wednesday after revisions that call for high schoolers to be able to use course grades rather than test scores for graduation, later testing windows and a waiver of accountability requirements, among others. The legislation, HB67 (Koehler-Bird), originally called for cancellation of state academic assessments, as was done last spring when the pandemic sparked a statewide closing of schools. But the U.S. Department of Education said recently it would not accept state waiver requests for blanket cancellation of testing, instead offering more limited waivers of accountability requirements and other laws. Then the House on Thursday sent this bill on to Senate, though Democratic opposition prevented it from moving forward with an emergency clause.

The sponsor of legislation to arm classroom teachers with concealed carry licenses (CCW) says he's open to all reasonable ideas to bolster school safety against active shooters, including House Criminal Justice Committee Chairman Jeff LaRe's (R-Canal Winchester) observation Thursday that Ohio requires 20 hours of gun training for armed security guards versus eight hours for CCW -- both far less than what the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) mandates for certified law enforcement officers. The 134th General Assembly's youngest member, Rep. Thomas Hall (R-Middletown), delivered sponsor testimony on a modified version of former Sen. Bill Coley's 133-SB317, with support from Majority Floor Leader Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) and three other House Republicans to date.

## **ELECTIONS**

Secretary of State Frank LaRose this week urged the rejection of a federal bill that he said would effectively take over how states conduct elections. The bill -- HR1, also known as the "For the People Act" -- was first introduced by U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD) in 2019 and reintroduced in January. Among its provisions, HR1 would require states to create automatic voter registration systems, expand early voting, and prohibit voter roll purges among other voting changes. It also includes a number of ethics and lobbying reforms, and would grant statehood to the District of Columbia.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose said this week that he has rejected the appointments of five county boards of elections members from four counties, arguing that each had not demonstrated the standard of competency to serve in their respective roles. The secretary of state also put Summit County on administrative oversight. Under Ohio law, county political parties recommend appointments to the secretary of state for approval. County boards consist of four board members, with two from each respective political party. Terms last four years.

The annual "Clearie" awards, hosted by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, recognized Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose for voter outreach and poll worker recruitment programs, his office said Thursday. "Ohio wouldn't have had our most successful election ever without the 56,000 patriotic Ohioans who stepped up when our state needed them," said LaRose in a statement. "This award belongs to each one of them."

## **ELECTIONS 2022**

The campaign of former Ohio Treasurer and current U.S. Senate candidate Josh Mandel released details of his 2020 divorce on Friday, according to media reports, as he appeared at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) and blasted Gov. Mike DeWine and potential Senate opponent Amy Acton, the former director of the Ohio Department of Health. Mandel and his wife, Illana Mandel, dissolved their marriage in Ashtabula County despite living in Cuyahoga County, and had details of the divorce sealed. In response to Mandel's campaign announcement, media outlets had pushed to have the records unsealed. On Friday, the campaign agreed to allow reporters to view documents.

More than two weeks into her run for the U.S. Senate, former Ohio Republican Party Chair Jane Timken Monday issued a statement calling for U.S. Rep. Anthony Gonzalez (R-Canton) to resign after he voted to impeach President Donald Trump earlier this year.

The following endorsement was made over the week:

- The Amalgamated Transit Union endorsed Nina Turner for Ohio's 11th Congressional District

## **ENERGY AND UTILITIES**

The Senate voted unanimously Wednesday to repeal the nuclear generation subsidies of 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin), continuing the chamber's strategy of unraveling the controversial energy law piece by piece. Sen. Michael Rulli (R-Salem), speaking about his SB44 (Rulli-Cirino), said Energy Harbor, operator of Ohio's two nuclear power stations, is likely in a better financial position after exiting bankruptcy, and energy policies "brewing" in Washington, D.C. appear to be more favorable to nuclear plants.

The end of mandated energy efficiency (EE) programs created by the recession-era 127-SB221 and rescinded by energy subsidy bill 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) is not the final word on electric savings after all. The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) is preparing to launch a series of stakeholder talks on the future of energy efficiency and peak demand reduction (PDR) programs that shift consumption to overnight hours through an "Internet of Things" (IOT) including smart thermostats and appliances. PUCO last week closed the books on energy omnibus 127-SB221's 13-year-old EE and PDR requirements on electric distribution utilities (EDU). Embattled 133-HB6 allows those programs to sunset when Ohio's four EDUs -- American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio, FirstEnergy, Duke Energy Ohio and Dayton Power & Light (DP&L) -- reached a cumulative average of 17.5 percent energy savings or Dec. 31, 2020 at the latest. Commissioners said last week that AEP, FirstEnergy, Duke and DP&L had managed 19.8 percent energy efficiency by the end of 2020.

## **FEDERAL**

With a provision in a federal stimulus bill that would raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour facing uncertainty in the U.S. Senate, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) said Monday that the Democratic-controlled chamber will find a way to increase wages even if the provision is taken out of the bill. President Joe Biden proposed the increase in the stimulus bill, and the U.S. House kept it as a part of the package that cleared the chamber, but the non-partisan Senate parliamentarian ruled that it cannot be passed through budget reconciliation.

## **GAMING/GAMBLING**

The Ohio Lottery is joining the National Council on Problem Gambling to dedicate the month of March to problem gambling awareness, the agency announced Monday. "The Ohio Lottery provides funding for prevention and treatment of problem gambling, with treatment centers across Ohio and specialized trainings. Throughout the month of March, counselors from across the state will attend virtual trainings provided by the Problem Gambling Network of Ohio to learn more about problem gambling and how to treat it," Ohio Lottery said.

The contractor running games for the Ohio Lottery urged lawmakers Wednesday to adopt an "omnichannel" sports betting law allowing wagering at casinos and racinos, lottery retailers and online. Tara Jones, director of government relations for Intralot, told the Senate Select Committee on Gaming that enough states have adopted sports betting to provide lessons for Ohio to take to heart, arguing for a mandated hold and a relatively high tax rate to maximize state revenue.

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE**

Sen. Cecil Thomas (D-Cincinnati) resigned Wednesday as the No. 2 in minority caucus leadership in light of his formal entry into the campaign for mayor of Cincinnati. At Wednesday's session, the chamber voted to move Minority Whip Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) up to the role of assistant minority leader and Assistant Minority Whip Tina Maharath (D-Canal Winchester) up to the role of whip. Sen. Hearcel Craig (D-Columbus) was elected to join the Senate Democratic leadership team as the new assistant whip.

In addition to passing a proposal to repeal nuclear subsidies via SB44 (Rulli-Cirino), the Senate voted Wednesday to approve SB36 (Manning-S. Huffman), regarding victim compensation programs; SB21 (Antonio-Manning), regarding stroke treatment protocols; and SB42 (Schaffer), designating the second week of November as "Ohio Diabetes Awareness-Heart Connection Week."

Wednesday's House session included passage of HB6 (Roemer), which modifies laws on various professions in response to the pandemic; HB7 (Grendell-Stewart), an update to probate laws; HB51 (Lampton), allowing county auditors to give tax relief to owners of property damaged in disasters; and HB66 (Hoops), regarding local property tax exemptions.

The General Assembly's Business First Caucus held its inaugural meeting late Tuesday afternoon at the Statehouse, with around 60 of the approximately 70 members of the caucus present. Rep. Craig Riedel (R-Defiance) serves as co-chair, along with Rep. Jon Cross (R-Kenton) and Sens. George Lang (R-West Chester) and Mark Romanchuk (R-Ontario). The meeting was an "introductory" one, Riedel told *Hannah News*, and included remarks by Dan Brake, chief fiscal officer of Wilmington-based shipping company R&L Carriers, as well as caucus subcommittee presentations.

Rep. Larry Householder (R-Glenford) Thursday announced two new pieces of legislation seeking to allow state and local health orders to be terminated by legislative bodies, including one that would go directly to voters to bypass Gov. Mike DeWine's objections. The former speaker said the bills, which have not been officially introduced, will bring more accountability and oversight to government.

In other legislative action, House Civil Justice Committee reported out HB41 (Lanese-Liston), exempting certain mental health providers' information from public disclosure; House Transportation and Public Safety Committee reported out road naming bills HB33 (Miranda-Denson), HB15 (Carfagna), HB19 (Sobecki-Sheehy), HB80 (Sobecki), HB25 (Pavliga) and HB36 (LaRe-Miller); Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee reported out SCR1 (Schaffer), urging Congress to enact the Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act; and the House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee reported out HB29 (Wiggam-Miller), regarding veteran ID cards.

## GOVERNOR

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Tracy L. Carter of Akron (Summit County) to the Stark State College of Technology Board of Trustees for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Aug. 1, 2023.
- Timothy C. Myers of Fremont (Sandusky County) reappointed to the Terra State Community College Board of Trustees for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Dec. 30, 2026.
- Mircea Handru of Tiffin (Seneca County) and Nicholas H. Gerber of Port Clinton (Ottawa County) to the Terra State Community College Board of Trustees for terms beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Dec. 30, 2026.
- Pamela M. Mowry of Ashland (Ashland County) reappointed to the North Central State College Board of Trustees for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Jan. 16, 2024.
- David E. Ball of Fairborn (Clark County) reappointed to the Clark State Community College Board of Trustees for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Nov. 30, 2026.
- Djimon Smith of Wilberforce (Greene County) to serve as a student member on Central State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending June 30, 2021.
- Keith D. Meredith of Lisbon (Columbiana County) reappointed to the Eastern Gateway Community College Board of Trustees for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Oct. 16, 2025.
- William H. Considine of Akron (Summit County) to the Northeast Ohio Medical University Board of Trustees for a term beginning March 8, 2021 and ending Sept. 21, 2029.
- Bryan C. Williams of Fairlawn (Summit County) to the University of Akron Board of Trustees for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending July 1, 2029.
- John W. Hershey of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Midwestern Higher Education Compact Commission for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Jan. 8, 2025.
- James D. Benson of Dublin (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Tuition Trust Authority Investment Board for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Jan. 30, 2025.
- Maria Sylvia Martinez of Hamler (Henry County) to the Commission on Hispanic-Latino Affairs for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Oct. 7, 2021.
- Ryan R. Augsburger of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Industrial Commission Nominating Council for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Oct. 20, 2021.
- Linda S. Bailiff of Granville (Licking County) reappointed to the Ohio Public Works Commission for a term beginning March 19, 2021 and ending March 18, 2025.
- Frederick E. Lampe of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) and William Canady of Pepper Pike (Cuyahoga County) to the Ohio Rail Development Commission for terms beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Oct. 20, 2021.
- Diane M. Miller of Toledo (Lucas County) to the Ohio Lake Erie Commission for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Sept. 1, 2023.
- Michael E. Denlinger of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) reappointed to the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council and appointed to serve as chair for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Dec. 31, 2023.
- Stephen M. White of Dublin (Franklin County) to the State Speech and Hearing Professionals Board for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending March 22, 2022.
- Callie Mitchell of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Counselor, Social Worker and Marriage and Family Therapist Board for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Oct. 10, 2023.
- John L. Weimer of Piqua (Miami County) to the State Board of Emergency Medical, Fire and Transportation Services for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Nov. 12, 2023.
- Tracy L. Zuver of Archbold (Fulton County) to the Automated Title Processing Board Bureau of Motor Vehicles for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Tim Bowers of Hilliard (Franklin County) reappointed to the Advisory Board on Amusement Ride Safety for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Jan. 1, 2027.
- Ann B. Meyer of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the Ohio Cemetery Dispute Resolution Commission for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending July 1, 2024.
- Ronald T. Puff of Mansfield (Richland County) to the Ohio Cemetery Dispute Resolution Commission for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending July 1, 2022.



- Mathew R. Old of Berlin Heights (Erie County) to the Materials Management Advisory Council for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending July 1, 2022.
- Thaddeus Hoffmeister of Wyoming (Hamilton County) to the Ohio Public Defender Commission for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Jan. 12, 2025.
- Kathryn Farmer of Bluffton (Allen County), Ronald J. Myers of Scio (Harrison County), Teresa M. Teeple of Columbus (Franklin County), Harry W. Trombitas of Dublin (Franklin County), Clark F. Donley of Columbus (Franklin County), Brian Castner of Powell (Delaware County), Paul Jellison of Wilmington (Clinton County) and Clayton A. Harris of Solon (Cuyahoga County) reappointed to the Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee for terms beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Feb. 6, 2023.
- Glenn A. Miller of Napoleon (Henry County) to the Statewide Emergency Services Internet Protocol Network Steering Committee for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Dec. 31, 2024.
- Jason R. Loree of Boardman (Mahoning County) reappointed to the Statewide Emergency Services Internet Protocol Network Steering Committee for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Dec. 31, 2024.
- Lawrence B. Mixon of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Wildlife Council for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Jan. 31, 2025.
- David Zenk of Whitehouse (Lucas County) to the Wildlife Council for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Jan. 31, 2025.
- Gregory H. Simpson of Milford (Clermont County) reappointed to the State Racing Commission for a term beginning April 1, 2021 and ending March 31, 2025.
- Kimpton E. Williams of Waynesville (Warren County) reappointed to the Ohio Thoroughbred Race Fund Advisory Council for a term beginning March 3, 2021 and ending Jan. 31, 2024.

## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Gov. Mike DeWine signed an executive order Thursday, Feb. 25 to reauthorize the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council. The council promotes independent living, self-determination and equal access for people with disabilities. Establishment of such a council makes Ohio eligible to receive federal funds.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

A modernized ticket system will allow Buckeye football tickets to be distributed more equitably, according to Ohio State University (OSU). The OSU Board of Trustees has approved an OSU Department of Athletics proposal to increase the number of price zones for tickets to home football games to six zones, up from two, for the 2022 season. "Providing more variability for ticket prices opens up Ohio Stadium to more kinds of fans and is in line with peer universities," OSU said.

## **HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced its disbursement of \$230.3 million in funds to support affordable housing programs. Programs through which funding was disbursed include the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) grants, Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), and the Recovery Housing Program (RHP).

## **HUMAN SERVICES**

Testimony from Ohio Domestic Violence Network Policy Director and staff attorney Micaela Deming delivered to the House Finance Committee on biennial budget bill HB110 (Oelslager) indicated the need for greater state support for victims of domestic violence, with Deming stating that as much as 10 percent of requests for assistance to Ohio domestic violence support programs had to be denied because of a lack of housing and resources. This comes as domestic violence fatalities are trending up by as much as 35 percent from July 2019 through June 2020, Deming said, citing preliminary data received by the Ohio Domestic Violence Network.

A new state kinship care program and compliance with federal law on child welfare will cost county children services agencies tens of millions of dollars per year, child welfare officials told a House subcommittee Thursday in asking for a \$50 million increase per year. Though she thanked lawmakers and the administration for acting as "champions" for children's services with substantial increases in the previous budget, Angela Sausser, executive director of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio said the child welfare system continues to face great need and soaring placement costs. "In a member survey from April 2020, 45 percent of PCSAs reported that the new state budget investments were already spent on placement costs," she said, pointing to 9 percent annual placement cost increases the past two years.

## **LIQUOR/ALCOHOL**

The Ohio Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) announced that Chairwoman Deborah Pryce retired Monday after 10 years in that role and a career in public service, including 16 years in the U.S. House of Representatives. She is being succeeded by former Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Attorney General Dave Yost initiated another suspension proceeding Friday for a municipal official facing corruption charges, Kenneth

Johnson of Cleveland City Council. Johnson was indicted in federal court in February on numerous counts, ranging from federal program theft to assisting with preparation of false tax returns, witness tampering and falsification of records.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

A large land donation is helping the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Natural Areas and Preserves (DNAP) protect a globally rare limestone barren habitat in what will be the first state nature preserve in Meigs County. "This kind donation is a wonderful gift to the people of Ohio," ODNR Director Mary Mertz said.

Before participating in hunting and fishing activities this spring, ODNR is encouraging all hunters and anglers to check the expiration dates of their licenses. Ohio's annual resident hunting licenses for the 2021-2022 seasons are \$19 and became available Monday, March 1, according to ODNR.

Ohioans can donate part of their income state tax refund to support Ohio's wildlife and nature preserves, according to ODNR. "These donations are a key part of strengthening and improving the natural areas we all know and love," ODNR Director Mary Mertz said. "The funds will go toward expanding the visitor experience and maintaining the already beautiful areas we have here in Ohio."

## **OHIO HISTORY**

As part of its event recognizing the state of Ohio's 218th birthday, the Ohio History Connection (OHC) released its list of legislative priorities for 2021, which includes state funding for history, arts, culture and tourism in the biennial budget, HB110 (Oelslager). The organization praised Gov. Mike DeWine's executive budget, citing his proposals to fund the Ohio History Connection at \$13 million per year. The group also lauded the governor's funding proposals for a national marketing campaign, lodging, indoor entertainment venues, bars, restaurants, Ohio Humanities, Ohio Main Street Program, TourismOhio, Ohio Arts Council and other agencies and nonprofit partners.

## **PENSIONS**

The Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) announced Monday the addition of two investment experts to its board. Former Rep. Richard R. Hollington Jr. is Treasurer Robert Sprague's new appointee to the board, replacing Lance Osborne, who served from January 2019 through January of this year. James E. Kunk is Gov. Mike DeWine's appointee to the board, replacing Harold "Chip" Elliot, who served from January 2019 through February of this year.

## **PEOPLE**

Longtime Capitol Square political reporter Randy Ludlow is retiring in April. Ludlow, a reporter for the *Columbus Dispatch* who previously wrote for the *Cincinnati Post*, wrote on Twitter that he will retire from the newspaper after almost 50 years in journalism but plans to keep reporting.

The Greater Cleveland Partnership (GCP) announced Friday that Baiju Shah will be its next president and CEO effective Monday, April 12. He succeeds Joe Roman, who has led the partnership since its creation in March 2004 and held the same role at predecessor organization Cleveland Tomorrow.

## **POLITICS**

The Ohio Republican Party elected political advisor and former Republican National Committee Co-Chairman Bob Paduchik as its new chairman Friday, replacing acting chair Bryan Williams. Paduchik's election followed an endorsement from former President Donald Trump. His only opponent for chair was former Rep. John Becker (R-Cincinnati).

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

The Ohio State Highway Patrol announced the recipients of its 2020 Leadership Awards Friday in a virtual ceremony, recognizing dozens of state and district award winners. Tyler S. Ross, of the Hamilton Post, earned top honors as the 2020 State Trooper of the Year. Dispatcher Amanda H. Hermann, of the Canton Dispatch Center, earned statewide honors as the 2020 Dispatcher of the Year.

The state has added two metro-parks to law enforcement agencies officially certified by the Ohio Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) for state policing standards issued by the Ohio Community-Police Collaborative Advisory Board. Five Rivers MetroParks in Montgomery County and Lake MetroParks Ranger Department in Lake County have completed the compliance process for the first two standards issued by the advisory board -- use of force, including deadly force, and agency and recruitment and hiring.

The Ohio Community-Police Collaborative Advisory Board has been weighing a wellness standard for two years but last week got a first-hand understanding of the profession's emotional and physical toll on peace officers. Cincinnati police Sgt. Don Scalf had been on patrol for a year in 1999 when he was involved in an accident that killed several others while on night shift; 20 years later, a critical incident he responded to triggered a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) episode from which he is still recovering. Advisory board members gathered for their first meeting of 2021 to resume the conversation on a statewide protocol for officer health and wellness after last year's revelation that suicide and stress-related diseases shorten officers' average lifespan by 21 years.

Police departments leading Ohio compliance with state law enforcement standards on deadly force, bias-free policing, highspeed pursuits and more turn out to be none of the Big Three C's and include 10 municipalities outside the state's top 10. Toledo, Hamilton, Kettering, Beavercreek, Mansfield, Dublin, Marion, Mason, Westlake, North Olmsted and Bowling Green -- the state's fourth, 11th ,

13th, 21st - 24th, 37th, 45th and 47th-49th most-populous cities, respectively -- are now certified in all best practices developed by the Ohio Community-Police Collaborative Advisory Board and administered by the Ohio Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS), save for the latest standard on mass protests and demonstrations.

### **TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE**

Auditor of State Keith Faber Friday released the second phase of a performance audit of the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), saying his office found millions in potential savings. The audit, the fifth performance audit of ODOT since 2011, reviewed pavement, bridges, maintenance, fleet, overhead and strategic information. The areas have an annual cost of \$1.4 billion, Faber's office said, adding that even small improvements in efficiency could have a large impact on ODOT's finances and operations. The auditor's office said that each 1 percent improvement across all the areas could result in a \$13 million financial impact.

The House Transportation and Public Safety Committee heard invited testimony from Ohio Railroad Association President Art Arnold at its Tuesday hearing, with committee members focusing questions on what railroads can do to prevent major traffic closures in rural areas caused by stopped trains.

### **TREASURER OF STATE**

Treasurer of State Robert Sprague announced Monday that the State Treasury Asset Reserve (STAR) of Ohio investment pool had received Standard & Poor's (S&P) highest rating of AAAM for the 27th consecutive year.

### **UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION**

The Unemployment Compensation Modernization and Improvement Council did not receive in-person comments from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Thursday given the upcoming departure of ODJFS Director Kim Henderson, though it did hear from Jeff Ficke, director of the public-private partnership advising ODJFS on unemployment compensation. The collaboration between the private sector experts and ODJFS has been "amazing," according to Ficke, who has a career in financial services. Their focus has been on fraud prevention, the ODJFS call center and its claims and adjudication process, he continued, and "significant progress" already has been made on fraud prevention.

### **WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Board of Directors on Friday approved a 7.1 percent premium rate reduction for private employers. "This will save private employers approximately \$72 million," BWC Interim Administrator/CEO John Logue said during the board's meeting.