

OHIO PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Bill Information

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

HB110 OPERATING BUDGET *(OELSLAGER S)*

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

9/21/2021 - Senate Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)

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

To make appropriations related to public transportation.

CURRENT STATUS

2/24/2021 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HB146

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

S)

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

HB157

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

HB267

LIMIT PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS (JORDAN K)

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

HB275

EXPAND POLITICAL SUBDIVISION JOINT PURCHASING AUTHORITY (LAMPTON B)

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

HB283

EXPAND DISTRACTED DRIVING LAWS (ABRAMS C, LAMPTON B)

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

CURRENT STATUS

9/23/2021 - **BILL AMENDED**, House Criminal Justice, (Third Hearing)

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

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

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

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

HB388 REGARDING VACCINE REFUSAL *(JORDAN K)*

To prohibit taking certain actions against an individual because the individual refuses to be vaccinated against a disease.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

8/12/2021 - Introduced

HB401 EMPLOYER-MANDATED COVID VACCINATION INJURY *(EDWARDS J)*

To exempt an injury or disability caused by an employer-mandated COVID-19 vaccination from the Workers' Compensation Law and to allow the employee to sue the employer for damages.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

8/24/2021 - Introduced

HB435 VACCINE REQUIREMENTS *(CARFAGNA R, SEITZ B)*

To address COVID-19 vaccine requirements for employees and students; to extend certain timelines for qualified civil immunity and expand immunity to include hearing aid dealers and hearing aid fitters; to authorize emergency medical technicians to administer COVID-19 tests; to expressly cover COVID-19 vaccine injuries under the workers' compensation system; and to repeal sections 3792.05, 3792.06, 3792.07, and 3792.08 of the Revised Code on June 30, 2023.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

10/7/2021 - House Commerce and Labor, (Second Hearing)

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

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

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

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

SB15 FISCAL OFFICERS-LIABILITY *(WILSON S)*

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

SB19 REGARDING PROPERTY TAXATION *(SCHAFFER T)*

To modify the law regarding property taxation and sales and use tax.

CURRENT STATUS

6/28/2021 - **PASSED BY HOUSE**; Amended on Floor, Bill Vote 61-36

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

9/28/2021 - House Civil Justice, (Second Hearing)

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

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

■ **CURRENT STATUS**

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

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

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

■ **CURRENT STATUS**

9/21/2021 - Senate Ways and Means, (First Hearing)

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

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

■ **CURRENT STATUS**

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

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

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

■ **CURRENT STATUS**

4/21/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance

SB169 **PROHIBIT MANDATORY VACCINATIONS** *(BRENNER A)*

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

■ **CURRENT STATUS**

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

SB209 **MASK MANDATES** *(BRENNER A)*

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

■ **CURRENT STATUS**

9/8/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate General Government Budget

Friday, Oct. 1, 2021

ABORTION

A bill making abortion a felony offense in Ohio if the U.S. Supreme Court were to overturn its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision got its first hearing in the Senate Health Committee Wednesday. SB123, sponsored by Sen. Kristina D. Roegner (R-Hudson) and Sen. Sandra O'Brien (R-Rome) would make causing or inducing an abortion a felony of the fourth degree -- the only exception being if a pregnancy threatens a person's life or poses a serious risk of "irreversible impairment" to a pregnant woman's body. The hearing followed protests by abortion rights advocates at the Ohio Statehouse Tuesday. Carrying signs and chanting "O-H, I-O, abortion bans have got to go," the protestors gathered at the Statehouse and briefly entered the Senate chamber.

AGRICULTURE

While a deluge of rain shortened the 2021 Farm Science Review (FSR) by a day, the agricultural technology show still drew a strong crowd, according to the Ohio State University (OSU) College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CFAES). Attendees learned about topics including the profit potential in carbon markets, energy cost reduction, weeds that can poison livestock, and farming in the rain and other difficult weather conditions.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg) is currently accepting new enrollments for the H2Ohio program. Producers in the original 14-county targeted area of the Maumee River Watershed can sign up for years 2022 and 2023, according to the department. The original 14 counties are Williams, Defiance, Paulding, Van Wert, Mercer, Fulton, Henry, Putnam, Allen, Auglaize, Lucas, Wood, Hancock and Hardin.

FY22-23 BUDGET

Ohio is working to expand access to computer science (CS) education in schools, and part of that involves adding more qualified teachers. Provisions in the FY22-23 state budget, HB110 (Oelslager), help to address this issue. The "most immediate" provision, according to Code.org Advocacy Coalition President Katie Hendrickson, is a two-year waiver extension allowing teachers who have completed approved professional development but don't have a full certification to keep teaching CS. Without that, teachers trained by Code.org -- a nationally focused nonprofit -- and other providers couldn't continue to offer CS classes.

BUSINESS/CORPORATE

The Ohio Department of Development (DOD) announced Monday that it has financial resources available to help businesses get started or expand their export initiatives as part of the International Market Access Grant for Exporters (IMAGE) program. IMAGE offers eligible companies a 50 percent reimbursement of up to \$10,000 in expenditures for activities promoting international business, including website development, international advertising, e-commerce, search engine optimization (SEO), marketing and website translation, compliance testing and trade shows. The first application period opened Monday and closes at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 9. The funds can be used between Friday, Oct. 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022, with additional periods announced quarterly subject to funding availability.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Ohio has been added to California's list of states where state-sponsored travel is prohibited. California Attorney General Rob Bonta announced that -- effective Thursday, Sept. 30 -- the Golden State will restrict state-funded travel to the Buckeye State because of language in HB110 (Oelslager) that allows medical providers to deny health care services to patients based on religious beliefs. Bonta said he's concerned that the law will allow medical providers in the state to deny care to LGBTQ+ Americans, including Californians traveling in Ohio. Center for Christian Virtue (CCV) President Aaron Baer celebrated California's move in a fundraising email.

CORONAVIRUS

Legislation to limit businesses' and schools' ability to mandate COVID-19 vaccination got taken off the fast track Wednesday, as House leaders said they wanted to consider new ideas and reach consensus following a large coalition of business and health care organizations' opposition to the bill's passage.

The House Health Committee passed HB435 (Carfagna-Seitz) Tuesday on its first hearing, and it was scheduled for a floor vote Wednesday, but after a 90-minute session delay for caucus deliberations, Republicans instead sent it back to the House Rules and Reference Committee. The bill only allows mandates for vaccines with full FDA approval, rather than emergency use authorization, and requires that employers and schools offer exemptions for medical reasons, natural immunity derived from a past infection with COVID-19, or reasons of conscience, including religious beliefs. The latter exemption simply requires a written statement from the individual seeking it. The bill includes a few exceptions, including for those working in children's hospitals, where the majority of patients cannot be vaccinated for lack of an approved product for the under those under the age of 12.

While hospitals are already overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients across the state, the Cleveland Clinic is expecting the situation to

get worse before it gets better. "Our forecast models predict our highest volumes of COVID-19 patients will come in the next several weeks, as this wave peaks in Northern Ohio," Cleveland Clinic said Monday in a statement on its website.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Saturday released guidance to the more than 3,500 COVID-19 vaccine providers statewide on administering booster doses of the Pfizer/Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccines.

Last week, the FDA authorized a third Pfizer vaccine shot for Americans based on age, health status and occupational risk and Gov. Mike DeWine said the state would make vaccine boosters available to select groups of the population as soon as practical. In alignment with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), ODH said booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine are now available for the following populations at least six months after completion of the primary Pfizer series, meaning at least six months after the second dose was administered:

- People 65 years and older or residents in long-term care settings SHOULD receive a booster shot.
- People ages 50 to 64 with certain underlying medical conditions SHOULD receive a booster shot.
- People ages 18 to 49 with certain underlying medical conditions MAY receive a booster shot based on their individual benefits and risks. The CDC has indicated that this is a determination made by the vaccine recipient, but those eligible are encouraged to talk to their health care providers if they have any questions.
- People ages 18 and older who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of their job or living in an institutional setting MAY receive a booster shot based on their individual benefits and risks. The CDC has indicated that this is a determination made by the vaccine recipient.

The pandemic has disproportionately affected women in the workforce, Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) Study Director Elyse Shaw said during a virtual panel Wednesday, but the recovery period represents a chance for "bold" improvements. The IWPR is a national think tank. The panel was organized by the Columbus Women's Commission (CWC) and also included CWC Chair Shannon Ginther, YWCA Columbus President and CEO Christie Angel and Columbus Division of Police Commander Kelly Weiner, who filled in for Police Chief Elaine Bryant. Shaw said the pandemic has "highlighted and exacerbated" existing disparities along gender and race, including wage gaps, and that women were concentrated in the jobs most affected and slowest to be restored. It represented a "perfect storm" as a result of those factors, she added.

CORRECTIONS

While praising the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) for its candor in a report that faulted 10 prison staff at the Correctional Reception Center in Orient for the death of an inmate earlier this year, members of the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC) Wednesday said the case raises considerable concerns for them. Wednesday's hearing was the first meeting where the committee was able to question DRC about its report, which said prison staff used excessive force while trying to restrain inmate Michael McDaniel, with the 56-year-old man later dying from apparent heart failure. DRC presented the results of its internal investigation to the panel, finding the use of force during part of the incident was unjustified and unwarranted.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Ohio Department of Development (DOD) said that applications for the new Transformational Mixed-Use Development Program are now open. The program provides a tax credit for major-mixed use developments in Ohio. The credit can be used to help finance new construction and/or improvement of vacant buildings. Developments must include an influence on the economic and social well-being of the immediate site and surrounding area that will spur long-term change in the area, according to DOD. Properties eligible for the tax credit must include at least two mixed uses, or three if one use is a parking structure.

EDUCATION

Effective Saturday, Sept. 25, Stephanie Siddens became interim superintendent of the Ohio Department of Education, following Superintendent Paolo DeMaria's retirement Friday. The State Board of Education had appointed Siddens as interim leader of the department in August, after Deputy Superintendent John Richard, the previously designated interim superintendent, announced he will leave effective Oct. 8.

Current and former elected members of the State Board of Education and associations representing local district leaders urged the House Government Oversight Committee Tuesday to pass legislation shrinking the board to include only its elected membership, phasing out the sizable minority of board seats filled by appointment of the governor. Under HB298 (Bird-J. Miller), the eight appointed seats would be eliminated as the current members' terms expire or they leave for other reasons, eventually leaving the board with 11 elected members. Proponents argued an all-elected board would be more accountable to the public.

Paolo DeMaria retired last week as state superintendent, but it turns out he'll still be reporting to state board members -- a much larger group of them. DeMaria starts in January as president and CEO of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), the organization announced Tuesday. DeMaria will succeed Robert Hull, who is retiring after serving as president and CEO of NASBE since 2018 and deputy director before that. DeMaria had told *Hannah News* in an interview ahead of his retirement from state service that he planned to keep working.

ELECTIONS

The Ohio Poverty Law Center (OPLC) released its analysis on the 2020 General Election, finding that despite the COVID-19 pandemic,

Ohioans voted in historic numbers, largely spurred by early voting options. The report, titled "Landside Victory for Early Voting," said that 74 percent of registered Ohio voters turned out to vote in November 2020 resulting in the highest number of voters -- nearly six million -- in the state's history. OPLC credited much of that increased turnout to expanded access to nontraditional voting methods, such as voting by mail, the use of drop boxes, and in-person early voting. In 2020, 36 percent of Ohio voters cast their ballots by mail or used secure drop boxes and nearly 23 percent voted in person before Election Day. The report includes national census data that show disparities in voter turnout related to income, race, age, and educational attainment were stark. State-level data show that in Ohio women voted at a higher rate than men and voter turnout was higher among White Ohioans than Black or Hispanic voters.

ELECTIONS 2022

Republican U.S. Senate candidate Matt Dolan announced Tuesday that he will travel the state as part of his Ohio Matters Town Hall series. The kickoff of the tour will be in Independence on Saturday, Oct. 2. "To be effective and get results, Ohio's next U.S. senator must be accessible and accountable to the people. Voters expect nothing less from candidates as well," said Dolan in a statement. "That's why our campaign's first event will put Ohioans' voices front and center and mark the official start of my Ohio Matters Town Hall Tour."

Democrat Tim Ryan's U.S. Senate campaign announced Tuesday that it will voluntarily recognize a staff union organized with IBEW Local 1466 after all bargaining unit-eligible employees signed union cards. To guarantee neutrality throughout the process, Ohio AFL-CIO President Tim Burga oversaw and certified the election, the Ryan campaign said.

The following endorsement was made over the week:

- The U.S. Senate campaign of J.D. Vance announced the endorsement of Charlie Kirk, the founder and president of Turning Point Action.

ENERGY

The Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) says the state's regional grid operator, PJM Interconnection, is the right agency to control "supplemental" transmission costs that critics say have "ballooned" in recent years with no oversight. The Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) and Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) want board members to regulate smaller transmission investments -- credited by PJM's independent market monitor with an 800 percent spike in the new millennium, OPSB says. Ohio's electric utilities claim such a move could double the agency's caseload, slow economic development and cost consumers more in the long run. Staff agree but say state oversight of the "supplemental" transmission grid and other projects at 69-100 kilovolts (kV), if the General Assembly approves new regulatory powers, could allow OPSB to review the benefits of competitive bidding and delayed construction "to achieve the same operational result at a lower overall cost." That is the takeaway from OPSB's new draft report on electric costs for transmission infrastructure linking local power generation and consumption to the grid. The siting board is now seeking public comment through Friday, Oct. 8 and reply comments through Friday, Oct. 15. The final report, commissioned by 134-HB128 (Hoops-Stein) is due Wednesday, Dec. 1.

GAMING/GAMBLING

A Get Go convenience store in Powell sold a \$2 million winning ticket in Thursday's Powerball drawing, the Ohio Lottery announced. The winning ticket holder chose their own numbers and added "Power Play," matching five of five numbers without the Powerball number, according to the lottery. The winning numbers were: "2-7-11-17-32+11 PP=3." This is the 59th winner of \$1 million or more for Powerball's five-of-five prize since 2012. The winner has 180 days from the draw date to make a claim. Get Go number 3547, located at 9590 Sawmill Parkway in Powell, will receive a \$1,000 sales bonus.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Tuesday's House journal formalized the removal of Rep. Jennifer Gross (R-West Chester) from the House Health Committee and appointment of Rep. Don Jones (R-Freeport). Gross recently told a Cincinnati TV station she'd been removed from the committee for pulling a discharge petition on her HB248 (Gross).

Legislation seeking to increase the number of organ donors in the state unanimously passed the Senate on Tuesday. Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard) said HB21 (Koehler) requires the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) and deputy registrars to ask anyone applying for or renewing a motor vehicle registration if they would like to be an organ donor, unless they've already certified their willingness to donate their organs. The bill also increases suggested donations for the Second Chance Trust Fund and the "Donate Life" license plate.

At the beginning of Tuesday's session, Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) announced that Sen. Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) has been hospitalized following a "setback" in her recovery from back surgery.

The House Government Oversight Committee got a first look Tuesday at legislation touted by Lt. Gov. Jon Husted and Attorney General Dave Yost as a way to ensure Ohioans' data privacy rights. Reps. Rick Carfagna (R-Westerville) and Thomas Hall (R-Middletown) presented sponsor testimony on HB376, the Ohio Personal Privacy Act. They announced introduction of the bill in July. "Currently, there is no national standard for regulating the collection and use of personal information. The purpose of this bill is not only to establish a statewide standard for data privacy in Ohio, but also to serve as a national model, one that we hope states will look to emulate and ultimately for our federal government to adopt as our country's policy," Carfagna said.

Latynda Humphrey will represent the 26th House District, House Democrats announced Wednesday. Following the recommendation of

a screening panel chaired by Rep. Dan Troy (D-Willowick), the caucus voted to appoint Humphrey to fill the vacancy left by former Rep. Erica Crawley (D-Columbus) when she resigned to become a Franklin County commissioner. Humphrey, currently serving as bailiff at the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, is expected to take the oath of office in the coming weeks.

Representatives of environmental organizations and American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio urged members of the House Public Utilities Committee to support bipartisan energy efficiency bill HB389 (Leland-Seitz) on Wednesday. Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC) senior attorney Robert Kelter thanked House Majority Floor Leader Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati), Rep. David Leland (D-Columbus) and House Public Utilities Committee Chair Jim Hoops (R-Napoleon) for their efforts in crafting the legislation.

The "Telehealth Expansion Act" drew support from wide-ranging medical associations during Wednesday's Senate Health Committee. HB122 (Fraizer-Holmes) seeks to codify requirements for telehealth services, which exploded in number during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill, which passed the House floor unanimously in April, garnered over 20 written submissions of proponent testimony with another seven individuals testifying in support of the bill in person. From cancer care to behavioral health to dietetics, the bill was supported by medical professionals in a range of different fields.

In other legislative actions, the House Financial Institutions Committee reported out SB115 (Schuring) which revises the Ohio Pooled Collateral Program; and the Senate Health Committee reported out SB217 (Schaffer) which addresses long-term care background checks.

GOVERNOR

Dan McCarthy resigned as legislative director for Gov. Mike DeWine, effective Friday, Sept. 24. In his resignation letter submitted Thursday, McCarthy wrote that several of his predecessors in past administrations advised him to commit to the job for no more than two years "because of the pace and grind," and that now is the right time for him to step down. He's had the role close to three years, since the outset of DeWine's term in January 2019. McCarthy, who was president of the Success Group lobbying firm, has come under scrutiny for connections to a political group implicated in the FirstEnergy nuclear subsidy scandal. But DeWine has consistently defended him, most recently in the face of calls for McCarthy to resign by legislative Democrats.

Gov. Mike DeWine on Wednesday signed HB92 (Abrams-Loychik), emergency legislation that originally focused on addressing child abuse and neglect in military families, but was amended by the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee to require the Ohio Redistricting Commission to create a public website that will allow members of the public to share congressional district plans and to clarify that funding provided in the state budget for "law-related education" on judicial candidates applies to all candidates who have filed to run for judicial office in the state. The bill took effective immediately with the governor's signature.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

A study released recently on state vaccination rates -- including but not limited to COVID-19 -- by personal finance site WalletHub found Ohio was 33rd nationally and fourth among its neighbors. The study used 17 metrics and had three subrankings, with Ohio 28th in adult and elderly vaccination rates, 33rd in "immunization uptake disparities and influencing factors" and 41st in children and teenager immunization rates. Neighboring states ranked as follows: Pennsylvania, 13th; West Virginia, 21st; Kentucky, 28th; Michigan, 34th; and Indiana, 38th. The top five were Massachusetts, Vermont, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and North Dakota. Those ranked lowest included Nevada, Arizona, Texas, Georgia and Mississippi.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Youngstown State University (YSU) has wrapped up its "We See Tomorrow" campaign, which raised a record \$126 million. The seven-year fundraising effort was the largest campaign in the university's history, attracting 32,581 gifts, including 40 gifts of at least \$1 million and 57 out-of-town gifts of at least \$100,000, the university said.

Kent State University made Campus Pride's list of its "2021 Best of the Best LGBTQ-Friendly Colleges and Universities." This is the second time in two years Kent State has been on the list. Campus Pride is a national educational organization for LGBTQ and ally college students and campus groups. It provides resources and services to more than 1,400 campuses annually. The 2021 list is based on several factors, including information provided annually through the Campus Pride Index concerning policies, programs and practices.

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted announced Tuesday that the "Ohio College2Careers" program has been expanded to Wilberforce University and Central State University (CSU), which represent linked institutions. The program better ensures students with disabilities have the support needed to complete a degree and/or credential, earn higher wages and meet the coming labor market demands. As a result of the latest state budget, it will provide a full-time, dedicated vocational rehabilitation counselor in the disability services offices at the two universities.

The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) announced Thursday the state has been selected to receive federal funding under the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant. The grant, from the U.S. Department of Education, is designed to help low-income and first-generation college students prepare for college and receive needed support. Ohio will receive \$4 million annually for seven years to reduce barriers to college access and completion by the following:

- Increasing the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education of participating students;
- Increasing the rate of high school graduation and participation in colleges and universities;

- Increasing educational expectations for participating students; and
- Increasing student and family knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

The Ohio Department of Development (DOD) and Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies (OACAA) recently reminded Ohioans facing foreclosure, eviction or utility shut offs that they can receive assistance through state programs. The Home Relief Grant includes rent, mortgage and utility assistance, and the Home Energy Assistance Summer Crisis program provides funds for electric utility bills, central air conditioning repairs and air conditioning unit and/or fan purchases. Ohioans should contact local community action agencies to apply.

JUDICIAL

President Joe Biden nominated the following for seats on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio: Bridget Meehan Brennan, who has served as the acting U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Ohio since January 2021; Charles Esque Fleming, who has served as assistant federal public defender in the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of Ohio since 1991; and Magistrate Judge David Augustin Ruiz. The Northern District has court locations in Akron, Cleveland, Toledo and Youngstown. It serves more than 6 million Ohioans in the 40 most northern counties in Ohio. The nominees must now be confirmed by the full U.S. Senate.

MARIJUANA/HEMP

While there has been some improvement over the last three years, patients and prospective patients of the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program (MMCP) are continuing to express high levels of dissatisfaction, according to a new study from the Ohio State University (OSU) Drug Enforcement and Policy Center (DEPC). According to the researchers' patient survey, 55 percent of respondents reported some level of dissatisfaction with the program, with 25 percent being "extremely dissatisfied" and 30 percent being "somewhat dissatisfied."

MILITARY AFFAIRS

Gov. Mike DeWine delivered the keynote address at the Ohio Military Hall of Fame Class of 2021 Induction Ceremony on Friday at the Statehouse. A total of 15 individuals were inducted in the hall of fame, including Medal of Honor recipient PFC Harold G. Epperson of the U.S. Marines and Army 1st Lt. W. Wallace Stover, the father of Statehouse lobbyist Steve Stover.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the Grand Lake Saint Marys Lake Facilities Authority broke ground on the H2Ohio Burntwood-Langenkamp wetland in Mercer County. This new wetland is the fourth "treatment train" associated with nutrient reduction efforts at Grand Lake St. Marys. The 89-acre project consists of three wetlands, several acres of planted trees and a large buffer area of planted grasses that will slow the flow of water and trap, filter and remove excess pollutants before they can run into the lake.

The muskellunge, or "muskie," is a popular game fish that can grow to immense sizes in Ohio's inland lakes, according to the ODNR Division of Wildlife. Nine Ohio reservoirs are stocked with muskie by the ODNR Division of Wildlife and one, Pymatuning Lake on the Pennsylvania state line, is stocked by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Staff from Ohio's London and Kincaid state fish hatcheries stock approximately 20,000 muskies measuring 8-12 inches every fall, ODNR said. Ohio lakes where muskies are stocked include the following:

- Alum Creek Lake (Delaware County)
- Caesar Creek Lake (Clinton, Greene and Warren counties)
- Clear Fork Reservoir (Morrow and Richland counties)
- East Fork Lake (Clermont County)
- Lake Milton (Mahoning County)
- Leesville Lake (Carroll County)
- Piedmont Lake (Belmont and Harrison counties)
- Pymatuning Lake (Ashtabula County and Pennsylvania)
- Salt Fork Reservoir (Guernsey County)
- West Branch Reservoir (Portage County)

The ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves (DNAP) is taking steps to further improve the conditions necessary for federally endangered piping plovers to nest. Beginning Monday, Nov. 1, part of the beach at Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve will be closed to public access to protect the various plant and animal species that call this unique shoreline home, according to ODNR.

PEOPLE

Ice Miller LLP on Friday announced the addition of partner Sara Gonso Tait to its Public Affairs Group. Gonso Tait most recently served as executive director of the Indiana Gaming Commission, where she was the chief regulator of Indiana's 13 casinos.

Former Center of Science and Industry (COSI) President and CEO Kathryn Sullivan was named as a member of President Joe Biden's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) Wednesday, following Obama administration roles including as administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. Sullivan is a retired astronaut and oceanographer, and was the first American woman to walk in space during one of her three Space Shuttle missions. The Biden administration also noted she has held leadership positions in higher education and the private sector.

Noah Johnson recently joined the Ohio Insurance Institute (OII) as manager of strategic public affairs, primarily assisting with the government affairs program and political outreach. Prior to joining OII, Johnson served as senior legislative aide in the Ohio Senate to Sen. George Lang (R-West Chester).

Sen. Kristina Roegner (R-Hudson) and Rep. Bill Roemer (R-Richfield) were both recently presented with the Outstanding Legislator Award from the Ohio Society of CPAs for their work to improve Ohio's tax code and business climate.

The Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities (OACBHA) recently announced the recipients of its 2021 CARES Awards which are presented annually to frontline workers and leaders throughout the state who have dedicated significant time and expertise to support and serve Ohioans affected by substance use disorders. This includes health care and behavioral health care workers, police officers, firefighters, EMTs, children's services workers, and emergency department staff, among others. The following received the 2021 CARES Champions of Recovery Awards: Kate Siefert, Crawford County health commissioner; Jennifer Cochran, assistant chief of administration, Delaware County EMS; Chief Deputy Gery Thobe, Mercer County Sheriff's Office; Dr John Gabis, Adena Health System; Stefani Whitmire, peer support specialist, Townhall II; Lt. Katherine Williams, city of Franklin Division of Fire and EMS; LeeAnn Price, suicide coalition treasurer, H.O.P.E. facilitator, LOSS team member; and Patrolman Jerome Fatzinger, city of Wooster Police Department.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Gov. Mike DeWine said this week that the third round of funding for a program to help law enforcement agencies extradite violent suspects arrested on outstanding warrants is now available. The governor said \$200,000 is available through the Ohio Prisoner Extradition Reimbursement Program. The program is available to local law enforcement agencies that have limited funds or personnel, and it reimburses the cost of extraditing suspects on warrants for Tier 1 offenses who have been arrested in another state or jurisdiction.

REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT

The Ohio Supreme Court now has three lawsuits challenging the new maps for the Ohio House and Senate after three Ohio civic groups and six individuals announced they had filed a challenge with the Court Monday. The Ohio Redistricting Commission adopted new maps along party lines very early on Thursday, Sept. 16, which would limit the new General Assembly district lines to four years. However, all three lawsuits are seeking to have the Court order new maps to be drawn. Monday's lawsuit, *Ohio Organizing Collaborative v. Ohio Redistricting Commission*, which includes the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, the Ohio Environmental Council, and the Council on American-Islamic Relations Ohio (CAIR), argues that the new maps violate the prohibition against partisan gerrymandering and voters' equal protection and associational rights under the Ohio Constitution. The groups are being represented by the Brennan Center for Justice and attorney Reed Smith. Monday's lawsuit follows ones filed last Thursday by the ACLU of Ohio and the National Democratic Redistricting Committee in *Bennett v. Ohio Redistricting Commission*. This latter is the NDRC National Redistricting Action Fund's (NRAF) first legal challenge to a map drawn as part of the 2021 redistricting process in the U.S. Don McTigue of McTigue and Colombo LLC is the counsel of record.

House Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima) Tuesday responded to the three lawsuits brought against the Ohio Redistricting Commission that challenge recently approved General Assembly maps, saying there "is no plausible theory upon which [plaintiffs] can prevail in this action based on their own allegations" and that the leaders will be seeking to have the lawsuits dismissed. The Ohio Supreme Court, which had asked the commission and its members to respond to proposed briefing schedules by the plaintiffs in the cases by Tuesday, received three separate responses from the commission itself; Attorney General Dave Yost on behalf of commission members Gov. Mike DeWine, Secretary of State Frank LaRose and Auditor Keith Faber; and from Cupp and Huffman. The responses argue that the Court should not set a schedule for discovery in the case until a number of legal questions are first addressed by the Court. Alternatively, the briefs said if the Court moves forward with the discovery, the defendants suggest a schedule that would have all briefs submitted by mid-December.

However, the Ohio Supreme Court Wednesday set a briefing schedule in all three lawsuits, ordering the parties to file any evidence they intend to present no later than Friday, Oct. 22, 2021. Additionally, the court said the plaintiffs shall file a brief no later than Friday, Oct. 29, 2021; respondents shall file a brief no later than Friday, Nov. 5, 2021; and plaintiffs may file a reply brief no later than Wednesday, Nov. 10, 2021. The Court barred any requests for an extension of time. The Court also scheduled the first lawsuit that was filed by the League of Women Voters and the ACLU of Ohio for oral arguments on Wednesday, Dec. 8.

The Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission (OCRC) Friday unveiled its ideal new congressional map based on input from hearings the group held around Ohio, dividing the state up with seven Democratic-leaning seats and eight-Republican leaning seats. The coalition made up of academics, Democratic officials, community officials, and others across the state, went through a similar process for the Ohio General Assembly maps, submitting their proposal to the Ohio Redistricting Commission.

As expected, the General Assembly did not pass bipartisan legislation creating new congressional districts by the Thursday, Sept. 30 deadline, kicking the process to the Ohio Redistricting Commission. The commission will now have until the end of the October to attempt to draw its own map with minority support of its members. If it does not, the process reverts back to the General Assembly, which can draw a map with a simple majority that will last four years. The final deadline for a congressional map is Tuesday, Nov. 30. During the later stages of this process, maps must adhere to stricter requirements if it fails to receive the support of at least one-third of the minority members of the General Assembly. These requirements include the following: the plan must not unduly favor or disfavor a political party or its incumbents; the map shall not unduly split governmental units, giving preference to keeping whole, counties, townships and cities; and the districts shall be compact. Additionally, the state is losing a district due to national shifts in population, moving from 16 to 15 congressional districts.

Ahead of the Thursday, Sept. 30 deadline for the General Assembly to adopt a bipartisan congressional map under the Ohio Constitution, Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) and Sen. Vern Sykes (D-Akron), a co-chair of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, introduced SB237, their proposal for a congressional district map.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) issued a reminder Thursday that the state minimum wage will increase to \$9.30 per hour for non-tipped employees and \$4.65 per hour for tipped employees on Jan. 1, 2022. This applies to employees of businesses with annual gross receipts of over \$342,000 per year. The current minimum wage is \$8.80 for non-tipped employees and \$4.40 for tipped employees, and it applies to businesses with gross receipts of more than \$319,000 per year.

TECHNOLOGY/AEROSPACE

Business and tech leaders held the first "Ohio Tech Day" Friday, working to raise awareness on the role of innovation in the state economy and promote students' entry into the technology workforce. It was organized by the nonprofit Ohio X, with President Chris Berry saying he intends it to be an annual event. The day included a virtual forum and in-person events around the state and was sponsored by Facebook.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

The Unemployment Compensation Modernization and Improvement Council (UCMIC) heard an overview of the auditor of state's performance audit of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Thursday, following the release of the full document on Sept. 23. Tim Keen, senior advisor to Auditor Keith Faber, said the report provides "realistic and actionable recommendations that can contribute to the ongoing efforts of the DeWine administration, the General Assembly and this committee" on improving the unemployment compensation (UC) system. He also acknowledged the efforts of ODJFS Director Matt Damschroder and the cooperation of ODJFS staff.

For the week ending Sept. 25, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) reported 10,135 initial traditional unemployment claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). That number is lower than the previous week, when the department reported 12,952 traditional jobless claims. Ohioans filed 108,100 continued traditional unemployment claims last week, which was 51,676 fewer than the previous week, according to a news release from ODJFS. The total number of traditional claims filed from Sept. 19 through Sept. 25 was 118,235.

UTILITIES

The Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) released an email thread between the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), American Electric Power (AEP) and London Economics International Wednesday that raises major questions about the independence and objectivity of the commission's "independent" audits. Last year's third-party review of Ohio Valley Electric Corporation (OVEC) subsidies was redacted not only by PUCO but also by AEP Ohio's regulatory office, the newly released records show.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio's (PUCO) office of administrative law judge has set a deadline of Monday, Oct. 4 for public comments on the post-133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) audit of FirstEnergy and placed its imprimatur Wednesday on agency efforts to expand the audit to the utility's naming rights to the Cleveland Browns' stadium. Senior Attorney Examiner/Administrative Law Judge Gregory Price officially ordered independent auditor Blue Ridge Consulting Services to enlarge its probe of the company's "capital recovery" charges to determine the source of the \$102 million FirstEnergy paid to put its name on the stadium. PUCO signaled the move Tuesday after Ranking Minority Member Kent Smith (D-Euclid) of the House Public Utilities Committee urged commission Chairwoman Jenifer French to expand the audit to FirstEnergy's naming rights.

Sens. Mark Romanchuk (R-Mansfield) and Hearcel Craig (D-Columbus) told the Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) Governing Board Wednesday that SB117's (Romanchuk-Craig) bipartisan repeal of 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) coal subsidies to the Ohio Valley Electric Corporation (OVEC) is hopefully on track for passage, albeit with possible changes to placate Senate holdouts. Introduced in March, SB117 was last heard by the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee shortly before the June budget deadline, when OVEC stakeholders American Electric Power (AEP), Duke Energy and AES Ohio pushed back on repeal.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Board of Directors on Friday approved the expansion of the agency's December 2020 \$5 billion dividend to approximately 3,000 employers who did not originally meet eligibility requirements. The expansion was requested by Gov. Mike DeWine and allows for approximately \$30 million to go to the previously ineligible employers who, through

no fault of their own, could not perform their 2019 "true-up" in the timeframe for the dividend return.

WORKFORCE

Lt. Gov. Jon Husted announced Friday that the state's 11th application period for the TechCred program will run from Friday, Oct. 1 to Friday, Oct. 29. Since it began in October 2019, it has led to approval of 1,419 Ohio employers and 26,872 tech-focused credentials. Results of the 10th round, which closed Aug. 30, will be announced in the coming weeks.

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