

OHIO PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Bill Information

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

HB110 OPERATING BUDGET *(OELSLAGER S)*

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

To make appropriations related to public transportation.

CURRENT STATUS

2/24/2021 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HB146

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

HB157

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

HB267

LIMIT PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS (JORDAN K)

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

HB275

EXPAND POLITICAL SUBDIVISION JOINT PURCHASING AUTHORITY (LAMPTON B)

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

HB283

EXPAND DISTRACTED DRIVING LAWS (ABRAMS C, LAMPTON B)

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

SB15 FISCAL OFFICERS-LIABILITY *(WILSON S)*

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

SB32 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION *(RULLI M)*

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

4/21/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance

SB169 PROHIBIT MANDATORY VACCINATIONS *(BRENNER A)*

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

📌 CURRENT STATUS

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

SB209 MASK MANDATES (BRENNER A)

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

📌 CURRENT STATUS

7/13/2021 - Introduced

🔄 Week in Review

ABORTION

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost Thursday signed on to a brief asking the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, arguing that since the landmark 1973 decision legalizing the right to an abortion, the Court has never settled on a test for determining when the right has been violated. Yost is one of 23 state officials to sign on to the brief in a case before the Court challenging a Mississippi ban on abortion after 15 weeks. Mississippi has asked the Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade* as a part of the case. In addition to the brief joined by Yost, separate briefs in favor of upholding Mississippi's ban were filed by 228 Republican members of Congress and 12 Republican governors, though Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine was not one of them.

AGRICULTURE

While the 2021 Ohio State Fair is lacking many of its usual attractions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the state's livestock exhibitors and their guests will experience a particularly "spectacular" competition, according to Ohio Expo Center & State Fair General Manager Virgil Strickler. He explained during Wednesday's Ohio Expositions Commission meeting in the Ohio Building on the state fairgrounds that this year is a "total agricultural fair." Strickler and members of the commission had voted earlier to limit the fair to agricultural and educational activities.

ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

The Ohio Arts Council (OAC) Board approved more than \$18.4 million in grants to support artists, arts/cultural organizations, students, educators and public arts programming during its summer meeting.

That is the largest amount of OAC grant dollars distributed to applicants in the agency's history, according to OAC. There were 746 grants approved at the meeting.

CITIES

Speaking at a "Future Cities" forum hosted by the digital publication Route Fifty, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto said Monday that Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Kentucky could lose 100,000 jobs if they do not act in regard to a coming shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy. Alternatively, he said the right actions could lead to 400,000 union jobs in the four-state Ohio Valley region.

The final day of the "Future Cities" forum included a discussion on how local businesses can recover from the pandemic. Institute for Local Self-Reliance Senior Researcher Kennedy Smith hosted the panel, which included Pittsburgh City Council Member Erika Strassburger and Civic Innovation Project Founder and Director Lourdes German. Smith started with an overview of funding in the American Rescue Plan (ARP), including \$350 billion for state and local fiscal recovery funds; and specialized relief such as the Shuttered Venue Operators grants and the Restaurant Revitalization Fund. Both of those specialized items were quickly depleted, she said, but could receive additional funding through new legislation. A number of federal agencies also received dedicated funding for this purpose, Smith added, including \$3 billion to the Economic Development Administration, which recently announced plans on how that will be used; and \$135 million to the National Endowment for the Arts.

CORONAVIRUS

Gov. Mike DeWine announced Wednesday that all state of Ohio employees will be offered \$100 to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Spouses of state employees are eligible to receive a \$25 financial incentive to get vaccinated. "State employees and their spouses are encouraged to protect themselves, their families, and their communities by getting a COVID-19 vaccination," said DeWine in a statement. "Vaccines are the most effective strategy at stopping the spread of COVID-19 and preventing serious illness. I urge all Ohio

employers to encourage their employees to get vaccinated, whether that's through financial incentives, paid leave programs, or other incentives."

A recent Scioto Analysis survey of 27 economists on the Ohio Vax-a-Million program found 12 considered it to be cost-effective, six did not and nine were uncertain. The program ended on June 23 after five weekly drawings. Since, a number of states offered similar incentives.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced Friday that Ohio is receiving \$1,337,283 to support rural health clinics with vaccination efforts, particularly as many communities face increased challenges caused by the Delta variant. The funds will go to 27 rural health clinics (RHCs), which will use these resources to combat COVID-19 misinformation by developing and implementing additional vaccine confidence and outreach efforts. The funding is from the American Rescue Plan and is being administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) through the Rural Health Clinic Vaccine Confidence (RHCVC) Program.

Over the week, COVID cases in the state started increasing significantly with the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) reporting Tuesday a jump of 1,317 cases, far exceeding the three-week average of 537 daily cases and marking the first since mid-May that the state reported more than 1,000 daily cases. Hospitalizations, intensive care unit admissions and deaths reported in the past day also exceeded their three-week averages. ODH reported 127 hospitalizations in the past day, compared to an average of 43. ODH reported 535 people were in hospitals with confirmed COVID cases as of Tuesday. Thursday saw another 1,205 COVID-19 cases reported, nearly double the now 21-day average of 631. Ohio has had a total of 1,126,625 cases since the pandemic began. There have been a total of 20,490 deaths in the state.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendation that residents of areas with "high" or "substantial" COVID-19 transmission rates resume wearing masks in public indoor settings regardless of vaccine status includes 23 Ohio counties, according to the latest data from July 19-25.

Adams, Columbiana, Gallia and Lawrence counties are at the "high" level, defined by the CDC as 100 or more cases per 100,000 population in the previous seven days, or having a positive test rate of at least 10 percent.

CORRECTIONS

The Ohio Justice & Policy Center (OJPC) and ACLU of Ohio charged the state with a closed-door policy of denying parole to inmates ever to have received a death sentence -- even when later commuted to life with possibility of parole -- and they went to court to prove their point. ACLU and OJPC accuse the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) and Ohio Parole Board of arbitrarily denying 78-year-old Patricia Wernert and 64-year-old George Clayton parole despite their each having served 45 years of a life sentence and having amassed "exemplary" prison records. They say the state adopted a closed-door policy as recently as 2016 and 2003 at the earliest.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

A recent policy brief from the Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO) draws connections between involvement with the criminal justice system and poor health outcomes, highlighting policy choices that could help to alleviate the problems. HPIO's Hailey Akah led an online presentation Thursday, July 29 on the brief, "Connections Between Criminal Justice and Health," which was published in June. The brief highlights a "two-way relationship" wherein mental health and addiction conditions increase the risk of incarceration, which itself can contribute to or exacerbate problems with mental or physical health problems. Effects of racism and discrimination likewise play a role in increased involvement with the justice system, Akah said.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Gov. Mike DeWine's administration announced Monday the approval of assistance for six projects expected to create 591 new jobs and retain 432 jobs statewide. The projects are expected to collectively result in more than \$38 million in new payroll and spur more than \$30 million in investments across Ohio.

EDUCATION

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) is not including any mandates in its guidance for the resumption of school this fall, but strongly recommends the unvaccinated wear masks and that as many school employees and students as possible be vaccinated. Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff, chief medical officer for ODH, joined pediatricians from children's hospitals in Cincinnati and Akron to discuss state guidance for K-12 schools Monday. Vaccination remains the best protection and is strongly recommended for all school employees and students age 12 and up, who are eligible for the Pfizer vaccine, said Vanderhoff. He urged those with questions or concerns about the vaccines to take them up with a trusted health care professional like a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Addressing one reported side effect in children, cases of myocarditis or inflammation of the heart muscle, Vanderhoff said children are more likely to suffer from that condition as a result of catching COVID than from the vaccine.

Health departments for Columbus and Franklin County jointly recommended Wednesday that all students and employees at schools in the city and county wear masks when classes resume, regardless of vaccinated status, a more expansive recommendation than the Ohio Department of Health's call earlier this week for the unvaccinated to wear masks in school. The Ohio Education Association (OEA) also backed mask policies, saying local districts should "follow science, not political rhetoric" on the issue. "Educators want nothing more than to return to full, in-person instruction this fall," said OEA President Scott DiMauro in a statement. "But we want to

make sure that when we do, we do so safely for our kids and communities."

Teachers from Akron, Cleveland, Oberlin and Upper Arlington are finalists for Ohio's 2022 Teacher of the Year. The Ohio Department of Education announced the finalists from a slate of 11 Teachers of the Year for each of Ohio's State Board of Education districts. The four finalists are the following:

- **Kurt Russell** of Oberlin High School, a history teacher and basketball coach, representing District 2.
- **Allison Tomlin** of Upper Arlington's Hastings Middle School, a health teacher, representing District 6.
- **Maggie Oliver** of Akron's Helen Arnold Community Learning Center, who teaches kindergarten and first grade and works in special education, representing District 7.
- **Carla Neely** of Cleveland's Warner Girls Leadership Academy, a fifth and sixth grade science teacher, representing District 11.

The Ohio STEM Committee, which approves the designation of STEM schools, approved two proposals Monday for schools to expand the grade levels they offer. The committee voted to accept proposals from Bio-Med Science Academy in Rootstown to add students as young as kindergartners to its current grades 2-12 program; and from iSTEM Early College High School to add grades 6-8 to its current 9-12 program.

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) released almost \$22 million to Ohio this week from American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding set aside to address the education of students experiencing homelessness. It's the second and larger installment of a total \$29.3 million Ohio is getting via the Homeless Children and Youth (HCY) program from the federal COVID relief package. Funding totals \$800 million nationwide, with \$600 million included in this latest release of funds.

Ohio's annual sales tax holiday for back-to-school shopping begins Friday, Aug. 6 and lasts through Sunday, Aug. 8. The following items are sales tax exempt during the holiday:

- Clothing items priced at \$75 or less
- School supplies priced at \$20 or less
- School instructional materials priced at \$20 or less.

ELECTIONS

Two groups Monday announced they had filed a campaign finance complaint with the Ohio Elections Commission arguing that the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) had illegally given valuable campaign software linked to the Republican National Committee (RNC) to three legislators. The Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) and Common Cause Ohio said that by making the sophisticated partisan voter management and campaign software available to its 2,000 members, ALEC had illegally provided in-kind campaign contributions worth more than \$6 million in the 2020 election cycle in violation of its 501(c)(3) charitable status. In Ohio, the groups said that software was given to Sen. Robert McColley (R-Napoleon) and Reps. Scott Wiggam (R-Wooster) and Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati).

Rep. Bride Rose Sweeney (D-Cleveland) announced Tuesday that she has introduced legislation that would repeal a budget provision added by the Senate that bans any public official from working with or accepting donations from nongovernmental entities for activities related to voter registration. Sweeney said her HB380, also known as the "Election Engagement Restoration Act," would likewise repeal a ban on legal settlements between public officials and third parties, a provision she said would instead force endless and costly litigation.

House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) joined with counterparts from Michigan and Georgia, as well as U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), to call for passage of a national voting rights bill, arguing Republicans are trying to make voting harder in their states. In a teleconference with reporters, Sykes spoke against HB294 (Seitz-Ray), saying it is part of a nationwide effort to "push baseless conspiracy theories" and that it supports "the Big Lie" that the 2020 election was stolen from former President Donald Trump. She said it limits drop boxes for absentee ballots, writes into the law new reasons to throw out absentee ballots, and limits the times to request ballots. Sykes said any bill that rolls back the ability to vote "should be a nonstarter." She also said that Ohio Republicans are putting an "extreme amount of effort" into going after 13 cases of voter fraud out of 5 million votes cast, rather than taking steps to encourage more voter participation.

ELECTIONS 2021

Money in the special election to replace former U.S. Rep. Marcia Fudge in Ohio's 11th Congressional District has flowed mainly to two Democratic candidates, with former Sen. Nina Turner continuing to lead in overall fundraising. According to reports filed with the Federal Elections Commission on Thursday, July 22, Turner has raised \$2.3 million and has spent about \$2.8 million on the race, with \$647,125 on hand. She is followed in fundraising by Cuyahoga County Councilwoman Shontel Brown, who has raised about \$1.3 million in contributions, spent \$1.6 million on the race, and has \$357,470 on hand. Republican Laverne Gore reported \$11,033 in contributions, \$9,723 in expenditures, and has \$1,673 on hand.

In the other special congressional election race in the 15th Congressional District, top fundraisers were Sen. Bob Peterson (R-Sabina), who reported \$455,699 in contributions, \$161,403 in expenditures, has \$393,296 on hand, and has also lent his committee \$100,000; and former President Donald Trump's endorsed candidate, Mike Carey, who reported \$460,403 in contributions, \$303,129 in

expenditures, and \$157,274 on hand. However, another candidate, Tom Hwang, was at the top for spending, having lent his campaign \$575,000. He reported \$3,560 in contributions, \$491,036 in expenditures, and has \$87,523 on hand. Rep. Allison Russo (D-Upper Arlington) led among Democratic candidates, reporting \$273,023 in contributions, \$76,210 in expenditures, and has \$196,813 on hand. Democrat Greg Betts reported \$8,775 in contributions, \$4,022 in expenditures, and \$4,753 on hand.

ELECTIONS 2022

Rep. Brigid Kelly (D-Cincinnati) announced Tuesday that she is running for Hamilton County auditor.

A three-term member of the Ohio House, Kelly made the announcement after current Auditor Dusty Rhodes said that he would not run for re-election.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

For the week ending July 24, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) reported 10,603 initial unemployment claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). That number is lower than last week, when the department reported 12,619 jobless claims. Ohioans filed 155,935 continued traditional unemployment claims last week, which was 4,796 fewer than the previous week, ODJFS said.

ENERGY

With the ink drying on FirstEnergy's \$230 million federal penalty and further revelations in the 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) bribery investigation pending, the Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) doubled down Tuesday on calls for the General Assembly to repeal the bill's final generation subsidy and for the utility to come clean about the possible diversion of ratepayer charges to the alleged pay-to-play scheme.

The OCC Governing Board met in person for the first time in over a year days after federal conspiracy charges were filed against FirstEnergy and deferred with the understanding the company continues to cooperate with the government and pays the massive fine -- the largest ever collected by the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Gov. Mike DeWine should terminate top aides Laurel Dawson and Dan McCarthy over their alleged roles in the HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) bribery scandal, Reps. Jeffrey Crossman (D-Parma) and Casey Weinstein (D-Hudson) said during a Statehouse press conference on Thursday. However, DeWine spokesperson Dan Tierney told *Hannah News* that both staffers will remain employed by the governor's office, saying, "Both Ms. Dawson and Mr. McCarthy have done great work and great service on behalf of the citizens of Ohio. They have done nothing to warrant such action. ... It's political season. People are trying to misdirect away from the actual individuals involved in this case. We all understand that. But the claims they're making are not consistent with the facts." Tierney also emphasized that to date, nobody in DeWine's office or Husted's office has been contacted by federal authorities.

FEDERAL

Lisa Petit was named as the superintendent of Cuyahoga Valley National Park by National Park Service (NPS) Regional Director Bert Frost. She is the first woman to serve in the role at the park since its establishment in 1974. The position also oversees operations at the James A. Garfield National Historic Site and First Ladies National Historic Site. She had been serving in the position in an interim role for the past six months and will assume the permanent role as superintendent in the coming weeks.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Rep. Phil Plummer (R-Dayton) announced on social media this week that he is seeking to become the next House speaker in the 135th General Assembly, launching a bid to replace term-limited Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) after this session. Plummer, a former Montgomery County sheriff who is serving in his second term in the Ohio House, also held a fundraiser organized by one of his supporters for speaker -- Rep. Scott Lipps (R-Hamilton).

David Evans, who represented the 71st District in the Ohio House of Representatives for nine years, died on Wednesday, July 21 at the age of 84. He served through the 126th General Assembly before he was forced out due to term limits. It was a job he didn't originally envision for himself, telling *Hannah News* when he took over the seat that he had been asked to consider filling the seat held by Jay Hottinger at the time and who was a former fellow Newark City councilman. Evans had recently retired from State Farm Insurance when Hottinger, who was seeking to move to the Ohio Senate, asked Evans to consider the Legislature. A service for Evans will be held at a later date. Internment will take place in Cedar Hill Cemetery.

GOVERNOR

Gov. Mike DeWine said Monday that he is not "State Official 1" in the court documents charging FirstEnergy with conspiracy in the 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) corruption case. "I would not recognize me from that. No," DeWine said in response to a reporter's question at a Statehouse press conference. He said he's "not aware" of Lt. Gov. Jon Husted or any other member of his administration being "State Official 1," "State Official 2" or any other pseudonym in federal prosecutors' deferred prosecution agreement with FirstEnergy Corp.

GREAT LAKES

Saying he is angry and frustrated, Rep. Jon Cross (R-Kenton) Friday said he is introducing legislation that will increase fines against municipalities that are caught intentionally dumping raw sewage into Lake Erie.

At a Statehouse press conference, Cross noted a recent news story about the city of Maumee self-reporting that it had dumped 150 million gallons of untreated sewage into Lake Erie over the past 20 years. He called it "unacceptable."

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Aging advocacy group AARP highlighted HB221 (Brinkman-Gross) during a virtual panel discussion Monday, saying the measure to allow advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) to practice independently of a collaborating doctor would expand health care access in underserved areas, including rural areas. Though the bill has not received a hearing yet, it was referred to the House Health Committee in March 2021.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Beginning this fall, Kent State University at Trumbull will offer incarcerated individuals at the Trumbull Correctional Institution a chance to complete a Bachelor of Technical and Applied Studies (BTAS).

Kent State Trumbull and LaunchNET Kent State will be joining Sinclair Community College to complete the new "2+2 program partnership," the university said. Sinclair has been offering an Associate in Business Management degree at the Trumbull Correctional Institution for two years. Along with the degree, students can complete a certificate in entrepreneurship through the program.

Individuals and organizations caught engaging in hazing rituals will face "severe sanctions" at the state's public institutions of higher education, leaders of the Inter-University Council (IUC) of Ohio said Monday.

"We are focusing on a zero tolerance approach -- automatic dismissal of students found responsible for hazing," Bowling Green State University (BGSU) President Rodney Rogers said during a Statehouse press conference, noting other IUC of Ohio anti-hazing principles include increased investigatory rigor, better advisor oversight, improved family engagement, better training/reporting protocols and more transparency.

A little over a year after having been named interim president of Capital University (CU), David L. Kaufman was named the school's 17th president on Monday by the Board of Trustees and its chairman, Andre Porter, during a news conference. Kaufman came out of retirement in June 2020 to become Capital's interim president. He had previously been the CEO of Encova Insurance (formerly Motorists Insurance Group) -- an unusual selection of someone from outside the higher education community that both Porter and Kaufman mentioned Monday.

The Ohio University (OU) Foundation announced the receipt of a major gift from Dr. Joyce N. Herrold to extend the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program to its Lancaster Campus. According to the school, Herrold's gift, the largest documented to Ohio University's Lancaster Campus, allows expansion of

the four-year BSN program by providing support for the physical training space and equipment needed to provide students with "the highest-quality educational experience" on the Lancaster Campus.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

Ohio home sales reached 16,552 in June, a 10.2 percent increase from activity a year earlier, according to Ohio Realtors. The average sales price of \$256,094 represented a 17.9 percent increase from the average price in June 2020. First-half sales of 75,536 are 10.6 percent ahead of where they were at this point in 2020, and the average price for the initial six months of the year of \$232,780 is 15.8 percent higher.

JUDICIAL

The Ohio Supreme Court released a probate tool kit for judges and petitioners involved in guardianship cases. The 146-page guide assists in the creation of community-based programs supporting guardians and wards. Generally, probate courts monitor whether guardians are acting in their wards' best interests and whether wards are falling victim to elder abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor is combing through a long list of "iCOURT" recommendations to the Supreme Court of Ohio as part of the state's coronavirus emergency postlude following onset of COVID-19, when the Court amended its own rules and urged local jurisdictions to embrace virtual filings and proceedings to protect citizens and staff. As public and private institutions regroup in 2021, the task force O'Connor created says the judiciary should consider making electronic accommodations permanent. The "Improving Court Operations Using Remote Technology" (iCOURT) Task Force issued its 103-page report Tuesday on normalizing the judiciary's distance functions.

Ohio attorneys must register for the 2021-2023 biennium by Wednesday Sept. 1, the Supreme Court of Ohio has announced in a friendly reminder. Director Gina Palmer of the Court's Office of Attorney Services says all attorneys on active, corporate and emeritus pro bono status, as well as those admitted temporarily as a military spouse attorney, must register with her office and pay registration fees by the deadline. The fee is \$350 except for emeritus pro bono attorneys, who pay \$75.

Gov. Mike DeWine announced Wednesday the appointment of Courtney Caparella-Kraemer to the Butler County Court, succeeding Judge Robert Lyons, who was appointed to a different seat on the same court by DeWine. The appointed term expires Jan. 1, 2025.

LIBRARIES

The Ohioana Library recently announced the 2021 winners of the Ohioana Book Awards, the second oldest literary prize in the nation that honors Ohio authors and poets. The 2021 award winners are the following:

- **Fiction:** Carter Sickels, **The Prettiest Star**
- **Nonfiction:** Aimee Nezhukumatathil, **World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whale Sharks, and Other Astonishments**
- **About Ohio/An Ohioan:** Carole Genshaft, **Raggin' On: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson's House and Journals**
- **Poetry:** Marianne Chan, **All Heathens**
- **Middle Grade/Young Adult Literature:** Jacqueline Woodson, **Before the Ever After**
- **Juvenile Literature:** Thrity Umrigar, **Sugar in Milk**
- **Readers' Choice:** Tiffany McDaniel, **Betty**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Wapakoneta Mayor Thomas Stinebaugh has been indicted by an Auglaize County grand jury on public corruption charges related to business dealings that he conducted while in his elected position, according to Attorney General Dave Yost. Yost's office said Stinebaugh was indicted on eight counts of having an unlawful interest in a public contract, a fourth-degree felony, eight counts of conflict of interest, a first-degree misdemeanor, and one count of theft in office, a third-degree felony.

MARIJUANA/HEMP

An initiated statute to legalize marijuana for adults age 21 and older was filed with the Ohio Attorney General's Office on Tuesday. With its submission of the proposed law's summary language and 1,000 signatures, the Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol (CRMLA) officially launched its campaign to end marijuana prohibition in Ohio, according to the organization. The proposed law would legalize and regulate the cultivation, manufacture, testing and sale of marijuana and marijuana products in Ohio. Additionally, the law would allow those age 21 and over to grow marijuana at home, with a limit of six plants per person and 12 plants per household with two or more adult cannabis users.

MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM

A campaign by Ohio's Medicaid managed care plans to get more Ohioans vaccinated against COVID-19 kicked into a higher gear Monday with their increasing the value of their offer of a gift card for any Medicaid member receiving the first vaccination shot from \$50 to \$100. In addition, a new deadline of Wednesday, Sept. 15 was set to participate. The original \$50 gift card offer was set to expire Aug. 15.

According to the plans -- Aetna, Buckeye Health Plan, CareSource, Molina Healthcare, Paramount Advantage and UnitedHealthcare -- they have made "finding and getting the vaccine easier than ever" with Vax on the Spot (<https://www.covidvaxonthespot.com/>), a website with information on community vaccine events and walk-in opportunities at pharmacies. The site also gives details on how members can get the \$100 incentive.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

The Adjutant General's Department announced Monday that the Ohio National Guard and State Defense Force were shifting their pandemic efforts into a "smaller, yet flexible, response force" after deploying more than 4,000 personnel in total since March 2020. In the past 16 months, the release said, there have been approximately 70 missions to assist local and state partners in providing more than 360,000 COVID-19 vaccinations; receiving, packing and distributing over 150 million pounds of food and groceries to 2.9 million Ohioans; and providing temporary medical staffing at more than 30 long-term care facilities. Guard personnel were also sent to state and federal prisons during COVID-19 outbreaks.

NATURAL RESOURCES

A total of \$5 million in grants is now available for wetland projects aimed at improving water quality in the Ohio River Basin, Gov. Mike DeWine announced Tuesday. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is administering the Ohio River Basin H2Ohio Wetland Grant Program as part of the H2Ohio initiative, according to the governor's office. Wetlands help improve water quality by trapping, filtering and removing excess pollutants and nutrients -- such as phosphorus -- from the water before they flow into waterways and contribute to harmful algal blooms. Currently, there are nearly 60 H2Ohio wetland projects that are underway or completed, according to the DeWine administration.

Recreational shooters can use any of Ohio's public shooting ranges on Saturday, Aug. 14 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. without being charged, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife. On "Free Range Day," the shooting range permit requirement is waived at all ODNR Division of Wildlife Class A, B and C shooting ranges, ODNR said. The following public ranges will have ODNR Division of Wildlife staff onsite to assist shooters:

- Deer Creek Wildlife Area, located at the corner of State Route 207 and Cook Yankeetown Rd. NE in Mount Sterling.
- Delaware Wildlife Area, located at 1110 State Route 229 in Ashley.
- Grand River Wildlife Area, located at 6693 Hoffman Norton Rd. in Bristolville.
- Spring Valley Wildlife Area, located at 3570 Houston Rd. in Waynesville.
- Woodbury Wildlife Area, located at 41384 State Route 541 in Warsaw.

A complete list of range facilities can be found at wildohio.gov.

The ODNR Division of Wildlife launched a new incentive program that makes it easier for Ohio hunters to access participating landowner properties during the hunting season. Enrollment for the Ohio Landowner and Hunter Access Partnership program is underway now, according to ODNR. Once enrolled, participating landowners receive annual payments ranging from \$2 to \$30 per acre, depending on the characteristics of the property and recreational opportunities available. Enrollment contracts are for two to three years, with the possibility of an extension. A list of rules is provided to participating hunters before accessing a property.

The ODNR has installed new playground equipment at 10 state parks, the DeWine administration announced. Each state park received a climbing structure, slide(s), tubes or bridges, and four swings. Most of the parks also added climbing rocks to their playgrounds. The following state parks received new equipment: A.W. Marion State Park, Buckeye Lake State Park, Cowan Lake State Park, East Fork State Park, Geneva State Park, Indian Lake State Park, Maumee Bay State Park, Salt Fork State Park, Strouds Run State Park and Wolf Run State Park.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Policy Matters Ohio announced Monday that Tanisha Pruitt and Guillermo Bervejillo have joined the organization as state policy fellows through the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities State Policy Priorities (SPP) network. According to the group, Pruitt and Bervejillo will spend two years with Policy Matters as part of a fellowship producing research on tax and budget issues. The fellowship elevates new voices in policy research and analysis that affects people with low incomes as well as Black, Brown and Indigenous people.

OHIO HISTORY

The Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission (WSSC) met Friday, July 23 to discuss the final stages of planning before an event held on Statehouse grounds takes place on Sunday, Aug. 1. The "Family Day Festival" will be held at the Statehouse from 2:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1920 adoption of the 19th Amendment, which allowed women to vote. The event was previously scheduled for last year but was delayed due to the pandemic. It will feature the Ohio Women's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in the Statehouse Atrium to be followed by outdoor activities on the West Plaza.

PEOPLE

Dominic Manecke, the communications director for U.S. Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-Columbus), has left the office to take a job with C2 Strategic Communications in Louisville, KY. Wednesday, July 28, was his last day.

POVERTY

A new study out of Ohio State University (OSU) analyzed traffic to Columbus grocery sellers before, during and after the COVID-19 lockdown, concluding that when the pandemic hit, affluent Columbus residents responded by taking significantly fewer trips to large grocery and big-box stores and ordering more online and stocking up when they did go out to shop. Meanwhile, low-income people had to double down on what they had previously done: regular trips to the local dollar stores and small groceries to get their family's food.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Cuyahoga County's Metrohealth Police Department has joined law enforcement agencies certified under state standards promulgated by the Ohio Community-Police Collaborative Advisory Board, the Office of Criminal Justice Services at the Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS) announced Friday. Newly certified police departments also include Grand River (Lake County) and Union City (Darke County). Newly recertified agencies include sheriffs' offices in Brown, Ottawa and Putnam counties and police in Butler Township (Montgomery County) and Sharonville (Hamilton County).

REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT

The U.S. Census Bureau this week reiterated its intent to provide redistricting data to states by Aug. 16, but whether the Ohio Redistricting Commission that draws the lines for the General Assembly and may play a role in drawing congressional lines meets before then is still up in the air. The Census Bureau said in a court filing in a case brought by Attorney General Dave Yost that it still is on track to release data that states can then begin using to draw district lines by Monday, Aug. 16. In a blog post on the bureau's website, Acting Director Ron Jarmin also laid out the timeline for the release of data, saying it will come in two batches. The first release on Aug. 16 will be timelier in its delivery, he said, while the second release by Thursday, Sept. 30, will be easier to use.

The Equal Districts Coalition began its 10-city town hall tour to demand fair maps this week in Athens, Cincinnati, Canton and Dayton. Additional town halls are set for Saturday, July 31, at 10 a.m. in Toledo; Saturday, July 31, at 1 p.m. in Lima; Monday, Aug. 2, at 5 p.m. in Youngstown; Wednesday, Aug. 4, at 5 p.m. in Columbus; Saturday, Aug. 7 at 10 a.m. in Cleveland; and Saturday, Aug. 7, at 2 p.m. in Akron.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Secretary of State Frank LaRose said Friday that 17,387 new business filings were made with his office in June. In just the first six months of 2021, Ohio has surpassed 111,000 new business filings. Five years ago in 2016, it took an entire year for Ohioans to create 105,009 new businesses, the secretary of state said.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The DeWine administration has until Saturday, Sept. 25 to respond to \$250,000 in questioned costs documented by the Ohio Inspector General's (OIG) Office at the Circleville Juvenile Correction Facility (CJCF). State investigators say CJCF staff have neglected to obtain Controlling Board approval for fitness equipment exceeding \$50,000, made "wasteful" purchases, circumvented Ohio Penal Industries' (OPI) pricing and waiver processes, did not properly inventory purchases, bought minors violent, "mature" video games, and failed to comply with contracting requirements for the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and Encouraging Diversity, Growth and Equity (EDGE) programs for underrepresented groups, including women and the disabled, or for the state's Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP). Inspector General Randall Meyer opened the investigation on Aug. 22, 2019 following allegations of "frivolous purchases" with taxpayer dollars at the DYS detention center.

TECHNOLOGY/AEROSPACE

Members of the CyberOhio Advisory Board heard from Rep. Thomas Hall (R-Middletown) Thursday on his "Ohio Personal Privacy Act," HB376 (Hall-Carfagna), which would give Ohioans a new set of rights about information collected by certain businesses. Hall told the board he hopes to see the bill passed and used to enact a national framework. During board discussion of the topic, Battelle Chief Information Officer (CIO) David White voiced concern about having to comply with multiple states' laws and said he did not anticipate a national law. Board President Kirk Herath discussed laws already enacted in other states and told White that he did not see the Ohio bill affecting how businesses handle employee use of company-owned technology and privacy for those devices.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Jobless Ohioans will not immediately see an extra \$300 reappear in their weekly unemployment benefit checks. Franklin County Common Pleas Court Judge Michael Holbrook on Thursday rejected a motion seeking to require the DeWine administration to immediately reinstate the supplemental unemployment benefits provided under the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program. Gov. Mike DeWine earlier this year on June 26 ended Ohio's participation in the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program, a COVID relief initiative that offered an additional \$300 in unemployment benefits. He cited the arguments of business groups who said the supplemental benefits were driving workforce shortages. The program officially expires Sept. 6.

Ohio has paid over \$2 billion in false unemployment compensation claims since the onset of COVID-19, and some constituents with valid claims continue to have difficulty communicating with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and resolving problems with delayed and denied payments. As of April, however, the Public-Private Partnership (P3) Team launched by the governor to help correct those inefficiencies has managed to eliminate the overwhelming majority of fraudulent unemployment claims, increase call center capacity 65 percent and reduce repeat callers by half. That's the takeaway from Thursday's draft report of the Unemployment Compensation Modernization and Improvement Council, which has been meeting since February as the P3 Team led by financial services executive Jeff Ficke has worked to fix the state's traditional unemployment insurance (UI) and pandemic unemployment insurance (PUI) systems.

UTILITIES

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) declared a formal end to emergency orders issued to utilities, railroads and transportation providers as part of the DeWine administration's larger state of emergency addressing COVID-19, which the governor terminated by executive order on June 18, 2021.