

## OHIO PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

### Bill Information

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

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

#### CURRENT STATUS

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

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#### **HB110** OPERATING BUDGET *(OELSLAGER S)*

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

#### CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

#### CURRENT STATUS

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

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

To make appropriations related to public transportation.

#### CURRENT STATUS

2/24/2021 - Referred to Committee House Finance

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**HB146**

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

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

**CURRENT STATUS**

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

**HB157**

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

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

**CURRENT STATUS**

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

**HB267**

**LIMIT PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS** (JORDAN K)

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

**CURRENT STATUS**

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

**HB275**

**EXPAND POLITICAL SUBDIVISION JOINT PURCHASING AUTHORITY** (LAMPTON B)

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

**CURRENT STATUS**

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

**HB283**

**EXPAND DISTRACTED DRIVING LAWS** (ABRAMS C, LAMPTON B)

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

**CURRENT STATUS**

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

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

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

### CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

### CURRENT STATUS

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

## SB15 FISCAL OFFICERS-LIABILITY *(WILSON S)*

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

### CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

### CURRENT STATUS

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

## SB32 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION *(RULLI M)*

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

### CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

### **CURRENT STATUS**

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

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

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

### **CURRENT STATUS**

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

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

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

### **CURRENT STATUS**

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

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

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

### **CURRENT STATUS**

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

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

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

### **CURRENT STATUS**

4/21/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance

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

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

## CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

## CURRENT STATUS

7/13/2021 - Introduced

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## Week in Review

**Friday, Aug. 6, 2021**

### **ABORTION**

A total of 26 Ohio legislators -- nine from Congress and 17 from the General Assembly -- have signed amicus briefs asking the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that guarantees a person's right to terminate their pregnancy. The following members of Congress signed the congressional brief: U.S. Reps. Troy Balderson (R-Zanesville), Steve Chabot (R-Cincinnati), Warren Davidson (R-Troy), Bob Gibbs (R-Lakeville), Bill Johnson (R-Marietta), Jim Jordan (R-Urbana), Bob Latta (R-Bowling Green), Mike Turner (R-Centerville) and Brad Wenstrup (R-Cincinnati). The following members of the General Assembly signed the state legislators' brief: Sen. Steve Huffman (R-Tipp City) and Reps. Tom Brinkman (R-Cincinnati), Reggie Stoltzfus (R-Minerva), Jennifer Gross (R-West Chester), Ron Ferguson (R-Wintersville), Thomas Hall (R-Middletown), Bill Dean (R-Xenia), Gary Click (R-Vickery), Adam Bird (R-Cincinnati), Paul Zeltwanger (R-Mason), Craig Riedel (R-Defiance), Rodney Creech (R-West Alexandria) and Kyle Koehler (R-Springfield). The following members of the General Assembly signed Susan B. Anthony List's brief: Sen. Kristina Roegner (R-Hudson) and Reps. Sarah Fowler Arthur (R-Rock Creek), Gross, Jean Schmidt (R-Loveland) and Jena Powell (R-Arcanum).

### **ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT**

While the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) continues to ban student-athletes from earning compensation from their name, image and likeness (NIL), high schools are likely to immediately begin feeling the effects of the new NIL policy at the college level, OHSAA Compliance Director Kristin Ronai said Wednesday at a Columbus Metropolitan Club (CMC) forum.

The state of Ohio is planning to chip in \$2 million annually for at least 15 years to help keep Cleveland's Major League Baseball (MLB) team at Progressive Field, Gov. Mike DeWine announced Thursday. DeWine, Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish, Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson, Cuyahoga County Council President Pernel Jones and Indians owner Paul Dolan said during a press conference that the prospective lease agreement would guarantee that the team, soon to be known as the Guardians, would remain in Cleveland until at least 2036, with the potential for an extension to 2046.

### **ATTORNEY GENERAL**

Attorney General Dave Yost says FirstEnergy Corp.'s fired CEO and head of external affairs and the DeWine administration's onetime utility chairman, Sam Randazzo, are part of the \$61 million "unholy alliance" that returned Larry Householder to the speakership, secured passage of energy bailout 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin), and enriched them and their supporters. Yost added Randazzo and former FirstEnergy executives to his corruption lawsuit Thursday and hinted more could come.

### **AUDITOR OF STATE**

Nearly 80 percent of local governments in Ohio were better off financially at the end of 2020 than they were at the beginning of the year despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Auditor Keith Faber told reporters Thursday. Faber held a roundtable discussion with Statehouse reporters in his ceremonial office where he weighed in on everything from his office's overall functions, to the Ohio Redistricting Commission he is a member of, to the problems with Ohio's unemployment compensation system, which Faber's office is currently reviewing through two separate audits. On local governments' weathering the pandemic, Faber said most Ohio cities and counties ended 2020 with more money than they started, with the average of their carry forward balances increasing by 20 percent.

### **BUSINESS/CORPORATE**

Ohio's efforts to distribute federal COVID-19 relief funds continue, with the newly renamed Department of Development (DOD)

reviewing applications for the business grant programs created in SB108 (S. Huffman- Romanchuk) and SB109 (Manning-Rulli). The state budget -- HB110 (Oelslager) -- doubled the total funding for the four programs from \$155 million to \$310 million, and DOD has already received 8,229 applications requesting approximately \$135.6 million as of July 28. "I strongly encourage Ohio's small and medium-sized business owners to apply for these grants," Gov. Mike DeWine said. "Funding is set aside for businesses in all of Ohio's 88 counties and grants range from \$10,000 to \$30,000 apiece. As we continue our recovery from the pandemic, we want to give our local businesses this money to help them successfully move forward."

## **CORONAVIRUS**

Ohio is again seeing a surge in the number of COVID-19 cases, registering 895 new cases on Monday, 1,769 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday and another 2,167 new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also updated its count of Ohio counties at a "high" or "substantial" transmission rate for which indoor masking is recommended, bringing that to 67 in total on Tuesday. That total included 17 counties at a high level and 50 at a substantial level. The new "high transmission" list includes Adams, Allen, Ashland, Clinton, Defiance, Fairfield, Fulton, Gallia, Greene, Highland, Lawrence, Miami, Monroe, Montgomery, Scioto, Shelby and Williams counties.

Meanwhile, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) reported Wednesday another 11,794 individuals had started the vaccination in the last day, taking the total in the state who have started a vaccine to 5,801,034 or 49.63 percent of Ohio's population.

The Ohio Hospital Association (OHA) announced Tuesday that its Board of Trustees approved a policy statement recommending hospitals independently adopt policies requiring COVID-19 vaccination for employees and staff, with local factors determining whether, how and when policies are implemented. The association also "strongly encourages" that all Ohioans, especially those working in health care, receive the vaccine. Following the OHA announcement, OhioHealth announced that its 35,000 associates, providers and volunteers -- including both employed and independent physicians, staff in patient-facing and non-patient-facing roles, students and vendors -- will have to become fully vaccinated by Wednesday, Dec. 1.

## **EDUCATION**

Effective use of mitigation measures can help keep unvaccinated students in school after potential COVID exposure, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) said in guidance released Thursday to address when school exposure should or should not spark a quarantine period. Quarantine is not necessary following in-school exposure if students and staff are masked, physical distancing of at least three feet between desks is instituted and other documented prevention policies -- improved ventilation, cleaning protocols, screening for symptoms -- are in place, according to the guidelines. Absent implementation of all those policies in combination, quarantine still is not required for the fully vaccinated if those exposed wear a mask for two weeks or until a test administered three to five days post-exposure comes back negative, assuming a lack of symptoms.

Organizers of a coming lawsuit to challenge Ohio's school voucher system say the recently enacted state budget only strengthens their case with its expansion of the choice program. Bill Phillis of the Coalition for Equity and Adequacy in Education, leader of the landmark *DeRolph* litigation, said in a virtual news conference Monday that the Vouchers Hurt Ohio coalition has picked up dozens more school districts just since the start of this fiscal year and plans to file the lawsuit "very shortly." They will likely file in Franklin County, anticipating that the state would move for a change of venue to bring the case there if it were filed anywhere else, he said.

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) released a "Return to School Roadmap" Monday that offers schools guidance on priorities of health and safety; supporting students' social, emotional and mental health; and improving academic achievement. At <https://sites.ed.gov/roadmap/>, the agency offers a variety of resources on those three priorities.

## **ELECTIONS 2021**

Trump-backed coal lobbyist Mike Carey Tuesday easily won a Republican primary for the 15th Congressional District seat formerly held by Steve Stivers, outpacing 10 others with about 37 percent of the vote, followed by Rep. Jeff LaRe, former Rep. Ron Hood, and Sen. Bob Peterson. Carey will face Rep. Allison Russo, who won the Democratic primary.

In the 11th Congressional District special election primary to replace former U.S. Rep. Marcia Fudge, Cuyahoga County Councilwoman Shontel Brown edged out former Sen. Nina Turner in a crowded 13-candidate field to win the nomination. She will face Republican Laverne Gore in November.

The following endorsement was made over the week:

- The Ohio Education Association (OEA) and the National Education Association (NEA) recommended Allison Russo in the 15th Congressional District special election.

## **ELECTIONS 2022**

Gov. Mike DeWine padded his re-election campaign account over the first half of the year, according to new campaign finance reports filed Friday, while the top Democrat in the race reported raising more than a \$1 million. According to the filings, DeWine reported nearly \$3 million in contributions, \$150,863 in expenditures, and \$6.6 million on hand. The campaign received \$394,192 of in-kind contributions from the Ohio Republican Party. His top Republican opponent, former U.S. Rep. Jim Renacci, reported \$21,959 in contributions, \$14,409 in expenditures, and \$1 million on hand thanks to a \$1 million loan he personally made to his campaign. Democratic Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley reported \$1.6 million in contributions, \$479,016 in expenditures, and nearly \$1.4 million on hand. Her campaign also reported a \$1,600 in-kind contribution from the Emily's List Federal Fund for research.

Republican U.S. Senate candidate Mike Gibbons announced that his campaign has reserved \$9.9 million in broadcast and television time for the 2022 election cycle. That buy includes \$2.9 million for the rest of 2021. Gibbons' campaign began running its first ad on broadcast, cable and radio on Friday. The ad, titled "We Believe," was produced by The Strategy Group for Media.

The following endorsement was made over the week:

- The gubernatorial campaign of Nan Whaley announced the endorsement of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 1199 WV/KY/OH.

### **EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT**

For the week ending July 31, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) reported 10,740 initial unemployment claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). That number is slightly higher than the previous week, when the department reported 10,603 jobless claims. Ohioans filed 148,607 continued traditional unemployment claims last week, which was 7,328 fewer than the previous week, ODJFS said.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA) Great Lakes Program has awarded \$7 million to the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS), U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) announced Monday. He noted the funding will be used to restore fish passage, enhance ecologically-beneficial habitat and stabilize streambanks by removing the concrete flume and applying a raised-bed approach along the main stem of West Creek. The money will be used to stabilize 3,500 linear feet of West Creek within the Cuyahoga River Area of Concern, restoring four acres of aquatic and terrestrial habitat.

The Ohio Water Development Authority (OWDA) has awarded \$4.9 million in low interest loans to Ohio communities to improve water infrastructure and water quality. For the month of July, OWDA funded 10 projects that will improve and replace aging infrastructure. The 10 awarded projects received an interest rate ranging from 0.5 percent to 1.79 percent.

### **FEDERAL**

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) spoke to reporters during his weekly teleconference on a bipartisan infrastructure bill, saying he believes it will help finally address the aging Brent Spence Bridge connecting Cincinnati to Kentucky. Portman said he hopes it will clear the chamber by the end of this week or early next week. He highlighted some of the provisions of the bill, including \$110 billion over five years for new roads and bridges. Under the current formula in the bill, Portman said \$11.5 billion of that will come to Ohio.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) said Gov. Mike DeWine shares his concerns for getting rental assistance in the bipartisan infrastructure bill to Ohioans faster at the state and local level. Addressing his Bridge Investment Act as part of newly passed legislation, the senator added Wednesday that Ohio has 3,200 structures needing urgent repair -- in some cases literally crumbling around motorists -- which in turn will drive Ohio jobs under the bill's "Buy America" focus.

### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE**

Recently appointed Rep. Kevin Miller (R-Newark) told *Hannah News* that he has found a new challenge to take on every few years and moving from legislative liaison for the Ohio State Highway Patrol to the Ohio House is the latest one. Succeeding ousted former House Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford), Miller said he never had thought he would become involved in politics.

Democrats are taking a "carrot" versus "stick" approach in their latest efforts to address what they describe as an unfair wage gap between men and women. Instead of whistleblower legislation from recent General Assemblies that sought to refer suspect employers to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC), the bill being proposed by Rep. Kent Smith (D-Euclid) and Monique Smith (D-Fairview Park) would award an Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) "Fair Paycheck Workplace" designation to employers that pass a payroll audit.

### **GOVERNOR**

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Brittany Nicole Sommers of Cleveland (Cuyahoga County) as a student member on the Cleveland State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 30, 2021 and ending May 1, 2023.

- Sanjay Jinka of Rootstown (Portage County) as a student member on the Northeast Ohio Medical University Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 30, 2021 and ending June 29, 2023.

- Cassidy Lynn Starnes of Patriot (Gallia County) as a student member on the Shawnee State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 30, 2021 and ending June 30, 2023.

- Andrew John Wessel of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) as a student member on the University of Cincinnati Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 30, 2021 and ending May 13, 2023.

- Rahul Mahavirprasad Shah of Beavercreek (Greene County) as a student member on the Wright State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 30, 2021 and ending June 30, 2023.

- Trina M. Carter of Akron (Summit County) to the University of Akron Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 30, 2021 and ending July 1, 2030.

- Pedro J. Munoz of Bellbrook (Greene County), Ann Marie Ream of Canton (Stark County) and Scott H. Neely of Westerville (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood for terms beginning July 31, 2021 and ending July 30, 2023.
- Laura Swanson of Columbus (Franklin County), Thomas Matthew Carroll of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) and Bill Faith of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Housing Trust Fund Advisory Committee for terms beginning July 30, 2021 and ending March 18, 2025.
- Vladimir Kogan of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Ohio Humanities Council for a term beginning July 30, 2021 and ending Oct. 30, 2022.
- Kevin R. Flynn of Cincinnati (Hamilton County), Davin Marcum of Gahanna (Franklin County), Renee Wood of Toledo (Lucas County), Gina E. Wilt of Hilliard (Franklin County), Rajai M. Saleh of Gahanna (Franklin County), Mirta Reyes-Chapman of Youngstown (Mahoning County), Kyle Corbin of Huber Heights (Montgomery County), Paul A. Jarvis of Powell (Franklin County) and Paul B. Glock Jr. of Dublin (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council for terms beginning July 30, 2021 and ending March 14, 2024.
- Karis Lynn Spence of Delaware (Delaware County) and Lisa N. Hickman of Westerville (Franklin County) reappointed to the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Council for a term beginning July 30, 2021 and ending June 1, 2024.
- David M. Bass of Copley (Summit County) to the Ohio Advisory Council for Aging for a term beginning July 30, 2021 and ending Nov. 21, 2023.
- Edward J. Dadosky of Blue Ash (Hamilton County) to the State Emergency Response Commission for a term beginning July 30, 2021 and ending Jan. 13, 2022.
- Marian K. Schuda of Worthington (Franklin County) appointed and William W. Harding of Dover (Tuscarawas County) reappointed to the Medical Quality Foundation Board for terms beginning July 30, 2021 and ending July 20, 2024.
- Brian K. Hathaway of Greenville (Darke County) appointed and Karen L. Beavers of Sidney (Shelby County) reappointed to the State Board of Emergency Medical, Fire and Transportation Services for terms beginning July 30, 2021 and ending Nov. 12, 2023.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

Ohio State University (OSU) President Kristina M. Johnson updated the school's COVID-19 safety policies on Monday to now mandate that, effective immediately, students, faculty, staff and visitors to all Ohio State campuses and medical facilities are required to wear masks indoors, regardless of their vaccination status. Masks continue to be required outdoors for unvaccinated individuals when they cannot maintain physical distancing. Vaccinated people are not required to mask outdoors. More than 73 percent of the Ohio State community is completely vaccinated, Johnson said.

Student-athletes in all 36 of Ohio State University's (OSU) varsity sports will soon have the ability to profit off of their name, image and likeness (NIL) -- such as through official jersey sales -- as part of a new group licensing program. The OSU Office of Trademark and Licensing Services and OSU Department of Athletics have entered into an agreement with the Brandr Group (TBG), the university announced Tuesday.

## **HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS**

Bill Faith, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO), Wednesday applauded action taken Tuesday by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to reinstitute an eviction moratorium in selected areas of the nation and state for 60 days or until Sunday, Oct. 3. The previous moratorium expired July 31. According to COHHIO, the CDC's new order applies to counties with substantial and high levels of community transmission of COVID-19, "which currently applies to 70 of Ohio's 88 counties," according to the CDC data tracking tool.

## **HUMAN SERVICES**

Gov. Mike DeWine signed two executive orders Monday that award Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program funding, following recommendations and review by the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

## **JUDICIAL**

The Supreme Court of Ohio announced Tuesday afternoon that it is now requiring all staff and visitors to wear masks while inside the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center regardless of vaccination status.

The ACLU of Ohio and Ohio Justice & Policy Center (OJPC) are appealing dismissal of a lawsuit they filed earlier this year to challenge the state's decision to garnish prison inmates' COVID stimulus payments. The groups filed Friday with the 10th District Court of Appeals to challenge Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Dan Hawkins' decision in June to dismiss the case at the state's request. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of Kenneth Woodson, an inmate at Grafton Correctional Institution, and Leonard Evans, an inmate at Marion Correctional Institution.

Gov. Mike DeWine Thursday announced the appointment of Dana S. Preisse to the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic and Juvenile Division. Preisse, of Dublin, will assume office on Monday, Aug. 16, taking the seat formerly held by Judge Terri Jamison, who has been elected to a different bench. While Preisse's appointed term will expire on Jan. 4, 2025, she must run to retain the seat in 2022. She previously was on the bench for 24 years.



## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Local governments and organizations can now apply for \$250 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to address water infrastructure needs, Gov. Mike DeWine announced Friday. The Ohio Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Grant Program is open to public and non-public entities that operate water systems across the state, with an emphasis placed on addressing the needs of economically-disadvantaged communities, according to the governor's office.

Former Councilman Kenneth Johnson has ended four decades at Cleveland City Hall with a 15-count conviction and possible 10-year prison sentence and will not need to wait for a final ruling from the Ohio Supreme Court on his suspension from office. That is now a certainty, as Johnson was found guilty of all charges Friday, including six counts of theft from a federal program, five counts of preparing false tax returns, two counts of conspiracy to commit federal program theft, one count of tampering with witnesses, and one count of falsification of records.

## **MARIJUANA/HEMP**

Reps. Casey Weinstein (D-Hudson) and Terrence Upchurch (D-Cleveland) have officially filed legislation that would legalize the use of marijuana for adults age 21 and older. It is HB382.

Charlie Trefny is the new government affairs director of the Ohio Medical Cannabis Industry Association (OMCIA), the organization has announced. Before joining OMCIA, Trefny led Grow Ohio's government and regulatory efforts in dealing with the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program (MMCP). Before that, Trefny served as a senior legislative aide for Rep. Tom Patton (R-Strongsville).

Attorney General Dave Yost on Thursday rejected the summary for a proposed law that would legalize and regulate the use of marijuana by adults ages 21 and older. The Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol (CRMLA) had filed the initiated statute with the Ohio Attorney General's Office on July 27. The AG's office said the petition was not a "fair and truthful representation of the proposed statute," citing seven defects with the summary.

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (Ohio MHAS) announced that it is partnering with Gov. Mike DeWine's Office of Children's Initiatives and the Ohio Department of Medicaid to award eight grants totaling just over \$1.7 million to expand mobile crisis services for children and families to 18 additional counties.

## **MILITARY AFFAIRS**

The Ohio Adjutant General's Office announced Monday that officials from the U.S. Air Force (USAF) and National Guard Bureau were slated to evaluate Mansfield-Lahm Airport's potential as the site of the Air National Guard's first cyberspace wing on Tuesday. The airport, home of the 179th Airlift Wing, is one of two locations under consideration; the other is Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport in Minnesota.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the Nature Conservancy in Ohio (TNC) are partnering to acquire and conserve 404 acres of forest land in Southern Ohio. The project will lead to 2,585 acres' being acquired as part of the Forest Legacy Program. A corridor of conserved lands will allow plants and wildlife to move and adapt over time, maintain working forests that contribute to the local economy, provide recreation opportunities and help fortify one of the most biologically diverse forests in the Midwest, according to ODNR.

ODNR welcomed 42 students as new members of the Conservation Teen Advisory Council (ConTAC) for the upcoming school year. ConTAC members are chosen to help ODNR expand its reach, impact and conservation efforts across the state, according to the department.

## **OHIO HISTORY**

Five women were inducted into the Ohio Women's Hall on Sunday during the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission's (WSCC) Family Day Festival held at the Statehouse. The event was part of the commission's efforts to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1920 adoption of the 19th Amendment allowing women to vote. The inductees included Amanda Wicker (1894-1987), Sophia M. Mitchell (1888-1978), Mary Eliza Church Terrell (1863-1954), Lucy Stone (1818-1893) and Col. Jean Fontella Hixson (1922-1984).

The Ohio History Center announced plans to reopen on Wednesday, Sept. 8. All visitors, including Ohio History Connection members, will need timed tickets to visit. The History Center said tickets will be available in two-week blocks. Admission is \$13 for adults and free to Ohio History Connection members. According to initial information, masks will not be required for fully vaccinated individuals but are recommended for unvaccinated visitors, although the guidelines are subject to change.

## **POLLS/STUDIES**

While a majority of those surveyed in a new Quinnipiac University Poll approved of the job President Joe Biden is doing on the pandemic, the percent of those approving dropped by double digits. Respondents gave Biden a positive grade on his response to COVID-19 by a margin of 53 percent to 40 percent, though that was down from a 65 percent approval in May. Overall, respondents give Biden a 46 percent to 43 percent positive job approval rating, though that was also down from a 49 percent to 41 percent spread in May.

Among other findings of the latest poll are the following:

- Respondents support a proposed spending bill to improve the nation's roads, bridges, broadband, and other infrastructure projects by a margin of 65 percent to 28 percent. Democrats support the measure 93 percent to 4 percent, while Independent voters support it 64 percent to 29 percent. Republicans oppose it 54 percent to 41 percent.
- A majority of respondents (57 percent) say that the storming of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 was an attack on democracy that should never be forgotten, while 38 percent say too much is being made of the storming of the U.S. Capitol and it is time to move on.
- Almost half, 49 percent to 39 percent, said they think Donald Trump will run for president in 2024, with another 12 percent not offering an opinion. A majority of Americans (60 percent) think it would be bad for the country if Donald Trump ran for president in 2024, while 32 percent think it would be good for the country.
- A majority of respondents, 54 percent to 33 percent, say they think Joe Biden will not run for president in 2024, with another 13 percent not offering an opinion. Just under half of Americans (48 percent) say they think it would be bad for the country if Joe Biden ran for president in 2024, while 37 percent think it would be good for the country.
- A majority of respondents, 58 percent, say they are concerned about the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus and a majority of respondents also say they support vaccine requirements for people in some professions. The survey found six in 10 respondents supported requiring health care workers to receive the COVID-19 vaccine while 35 percent opposed it.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

The DeWine administration opened the budget-driven 2021 Law Enforcement Recruitment (LER) Fund Monday with a half million dollars in potential awards and with an emphasis on more women and minorities in policing. The LER grant supports law enforcement agencies that collaborate with communities, create programming, or improve other internal processes to develop a "diverse network" of qualified applicants, according to the governor's office.

The Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) said Monday that a new Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) tower is planned for the village of Fredericksburg in Wayne County, addressing communication issues for first responders there.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) announced Sunday that Trooper Ian Lowry of Wintersville was honored with the Texas Department of Public Safety's (TDPS) Director's Award for actions "in helping save the life of a female migrant" who had fallen from a train on July 26. Gov. Mike DeWine announced in early July that 14 OSHP troopers and supervisors were being sent to assist local law enforcement in Texas.

OSHP placed second in a "best looking cruiser" competition organized by the American Association of State Troopers (AAST), trailing the Kentucky State Police (KSP) but outpacing all other entrants in the online vote. The OSHP image, which included lighting from an OSHP helicopter, received 65,529 votes to KSP's 77,944. The Georgia State Patrol had 19,030 votes at third place, followed by the Texas Highway Patrol, 17,474; and the Nebraska State Patrol, 16,933. The top 13 winning images will be displayed in an AAST calendar, with Kentucky shown on the cover. To see the pictures of the winning entries, go to AAST Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/StateTroopers/>.

## **REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT**

Gov. Mike DeWine Monday officially set Friday, Aug. 6 as the first meeting of the Ohio Redistricting Commission as mapmakers begin a condensed timeline to draw new Ohio General Assembly and congressional districts under new processes adopted by voters over the past few years. Under the Ohio Constitution, the commission replaces the former Apportionment Board and is made up of the governor,

auditor, secretary of state, and four persons appointed by the majority and minority leaders in the General Assembly. The Senate appointments to the commission include Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima) and Sen. Vern Sykes (D-Akron), who worked with Huffman on the redistricting commission reforms. In the House, Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) both appointed themselves to the body.

All members of the new Ohio Redistricting Commission will need to work together in good faith to create congressional and state legislative districts that best represent the will of voters, Secretary of State Frank LaRose said Tuesday.

Leaders of the Fair Districts Ohio coalition, led by groups including the League of Women Voters of Ohio and Common Cause Ohio, said Thursday state officials have not been transparent about key details of the process in the runup to Friday's initial meeting of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. This year's redrawing of maps will be extraordinary in two ways: it will be the first cycle governed by new rules enshrined in the Ohio Constitution via two statewide votes; and it will happen under a time crunch, as COVID-19 related delays in getting Census Bureau data will push state leaders up against constitutional deadlines for completing maps.

However, the Census Bureau announced Thursday that it plans to beat its initial projection of a Monday, Aug. 16 release of population data to states, setting a new release date of Thursday, Aug. 12. The Census Bureau had agreed to release the data no later than Aug. 16 in a legal settlement with Attorney General Dave Yost.

## **STATE GOVERNMENT**

In the opening months of this General Assembly, lawmakers authorized the state to join six professional licensure compacts in health

care fields, with goals of expanded opportunities for a variety of clinicians and increased access to care for their patients. Generally, the new laws will enable Ohio-licensed professionals to get authorization to practice in other compact states, and similarly allow licensees elsewhere to practice here. The compacts Ohio is joining have different timelines, criteria and methods of licensure.

The Controlling Board Monday signed off on three new contracts for state employees that were recently collectively bargained, covering employees in the attorney general's office as well 450 educators spread over five other agencies. In other action, the Controlling Board approved a request from the attorney general's office authorizing special counsel contracts for state agencies.

## **TECHNOLOGY/AEROSPACE**

Gov. Mike DeWine signed an executive order Friday to allow the Ohio Department of Development to adopt rules on an emergency basis for administration of a broadband expansion program. Lawmakers created a program to boost broadband access across Ohio in HB2 (Carfagna-Stewart) and funded it with \$250 million in the biennial budget, HB110 (Oelslager).

The Broadband Expansion Program Authority's members approved the scoring criteria and a timeline for grant applications in their first meeting Wednesday, with Rep. Rick Carfagna (R-Westerville) saying the two legislative appointments should be announced in "very short order." The current members are Department of Development (DOD) Director Lydia Mihalik as chair, Lt. Gov. Jon Husted in his role as director of InnovateOhio and governor's appointee Gregory Sample, who previously worked in the Internet service industry. The authority was created under HB2 (Carfagna-Stewart) and it will distribute the \$250 million to close the funding gap between a project's actual cost and what it needs to turn a profit, assisting with infrastructure expenses. Husted said in opening comments that it is meant to make it economically possible for nonprofits, local governments and private businesses to provide Internet service in unserved and underserved areas.

## **TREASURER OF STATE**

Ohio Treasurer Robert Sprague announced Thursday that the University of Cincinnati (UC) had been selected as independent evaluator for the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio's (FAO) iSee project. This project is the first to be conducted as part of the office's ResultsOHIO pay for success initiative.

## **UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION**

The Unemployment Compensation Modernization and Improvement Council (UCMIC) approved its initial report unanimously Thursday, following discussion of a draft version during the previous meeting. Co-chair Rep. Mark Fraizer (R-Newark) commented that the state auditor's office had not completed some of its work, which will be included in a later version of the UCMIC report. Sen. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo) and Rep. Jeffrey Crossman (D-Parma), who filled in for Rep. Lisa Sobecki (D-Toledo), had requested that the day's report be specified as either preliminary or an initial document. Fraizer agreed to call it the initial report, but said they had a statutory deadline of Aug. 11 and so the next report may be released on either Sept. 30 or Nov. 4. The council is not subject to a sunset after the August date, he noted, nor is it restricted from providing further reports. Fraizer also said there could be additional council meetings after Nov. 4 as needed.

## **UNIONS**

Ohio leaders joined President Joe Biden in paying tribute to Ohio AFL-CIO President Robert Trumka who died suddenly Thursday of a heart attack. He was 72.

## **UTILITIES**

An advocate for the elderly has joined the Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) and Ohio Poverty Law Center (OPLC) in pressing state regulators to immediately halt American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio's customer disconnections and to suspend all electric and gas shutoffs this winter while the DeWine administration investigates AEP's consumer notice and debt collection practices and the disproportionate impact of all utility disconnections on minorities, the working poor and other at-risk Ohioans. OCC, OPLC, Pro Seniors, Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, and Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio filed a joint motion with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) for an immediate moratorium on AEP's "alarming number" of service cutoffs, which reached two to 14 times more than any other electric utility in the state during the worst of the COVID-19 recession, or four times more than the average disconnection rate of FirstEnergy, Duke Energy and AES Ohio for the year ending May 2021.

FirstEnergy will have to forfeit more than \$17 million in capital costs that do not comply with Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) accounting standards, if the PUCO adopts independent audit recommendations, and will refund over one quarter of its vendor payments from the last 10 years, which the auditor says were improperly charged to utility customers. They are among Blue Ridge Consulting Services' findings from one of three FirstEnergy audits PUCO ordered in the wake of 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin), along with a separate commission probe into the company's "political and charitable spending." In addition to Blue Ridge's review of the utility's delivery capital recovery (DCR) rider, Daymark Energy Advisors is handling FirstEnergy's corporate separation and distribution modernization rider (DMR) audits.

In other developments, former PUCO Chairman Sam Randazzo's lucrative consulting agreement, which OCC secured through document discovery, was obtained by members of the media.

## **WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) FY21 net portfolio return was 14.4 percent, BWC Investment Committee Chair

Mark Palmer said Friday. BWC Board of Directors Chair Chan Cochran praised BWC's investment team for achieving the "spectacular" results in FY21.

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