

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

10/13/2021 - Bills for Third Consideration; (Pending Committee Report)

HB472 POLITICAL SUBDIVISION LIABILITY *(INGRAM C)*

To eliminate certain defenses to political subdivision liability for an employee's negligent operation of a motor vehicle and to reduce damages recoverable against a political subdivision in such actions by the contributory fault of the plaintiff or other parties.

CURRENT STATUS

11/2/2021 - Referred to Committee House Civil Justice

HB477 EXPULSION, TERMINATION BASED ON VACCINATION STATUS *(RICHARDSON T)*

To prevent expulsion from school and termination from employment based on COVID-19 vaccination status.

CURRENT STATUS

11/1/2021 - Introduced

HB481 COVID VACCINE, PASSPORT PROTECTION ACT *(JORDAN K)*

To enact the COVID-19 Vaccination and Passport Protection Act to prohibit schools, institutions of higher education, employers, and places of public accommodation from requiring COVID-19 vaccines or proof of vaccination.

CURRENT STATUS

11/8/2021 - Introduced

HB489 INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE ACT *(CLICK G)*

To enact the Inalienable Rights of Conscience Act regarding students and employees who object to certain vaccines and other treatments based on reasons of conscience, including religious convictions.

CURRENT STATUS

11/16/2021 - Introduced

HB491 PAID BEREAVEMENT LEAVE FOR DEATH OF CHILD *(BOYD J, RUSSO A)*

To establish family and medical leave insurance benefits and to require employers to provide an employee with paid bereavement leave on a stillbirth or death of a child.

CURRENT STATUS

11/17/2021 - Referred to Committee House Families, Aging and Human Services

HB498 ADULT USE ACT *(CALLENDER J, FERGUSON R)*

To enact the Ohio Adult Use Act and to levy a tax.

CURRENT STATUS

12/7/2021 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HCR30 OPPOSE VACCINE MANDATES *(KOEHLER K)*

To urge the Congress of the United States to oppose any COVID-19 vaccine mandates made by government entities and to prohibit discrimination based on COVID-19 vaccination status.

■ **CURRENT STATUS**

10/26/2021 - Referred to Committee House Government Oversight

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**

11/17/2021 - House State and Local Government, (First Hearing)

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

To expressly incorporate changes in the Internal Revenue Code since March 27, 2020, into Ohio law, 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**

1/10/2022 - Senate Appoints Managers; L. Blessing Named as Conference Committee Chair. Other Senate Conferees are T. Schaffer & N. Antonio

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

11/16/2021 - **REPORTED OUT AS AMENDED**, House Civil Justice, (Fourth 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

11/9/2021 - Senate Finance, (First Hearing)



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

SB260 LOCAL PURCHASING AUTHORITY-CONSTRUCTION (LANG G)

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

CURRENT STATUS

11/10/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Local Government and Elections

SB261 LAW CHANGES-MEDICAL MARIJUANA (HUFFMAN S)

To amend the law related to medical marijuana.

CURRENT STATUS

12/15/2021 - **PASSED BY SENATE**; Vote 26-5

Week in Review

ABORTION

NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio is now known as "Pro-Choice Ohio," the abortion rights organization's leader told *Hannah News* on Monday. She explained that NARAL Pro-Choice America decided in the summer to no longer have state affiliates, so they can no longer use the "NARAL" name or brand. She said that for now the organization will be known as "Pro-Choice Ohio." "Our mission will remain the same. The people who work here will remain the same. We're just no longer part of NARAL Pro-Choice America."

AGRICULTURE

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg) released the official dates for the 2022 fair season. The fair schedule includes dates for Ohio's 94 county and independent fairs, as well as the Ohio State Fair. The Paulding County Fair kicks off the 2022 fair season on Saturday, June 11, and the season will wrap up on Saturday, Oct. 15 with the Fairfield County Fair.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Drug seizures through cross-agency task forces increased to a value of \$42 million in 2021, up from \$29 million in 2020, Attorney General Dave Yost's office said. Federal-state-local task forces connected to the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission (OOCIC) reported seizures increased for illicit opioids, methamphetamine, cocaine and firearms, while decreasing for marijuana and currency.

BUSINESS/CORPORATE

Ohio small businesses continue to struggle with labor shortages and supply chain delays, according to a survey conducted by NFIB Ohio and released Dec. 29. Over 55 percent say they have open positions, and almost 60 percent of them said it was "extremely" difficult to fill them. A similar number said they have lost sales opportunities as a result, and 31 percent have changed hours of operation. Asked what they have done to attract or retain employees, 47.8 percent said they had increased wages, 21.89 percent said they had done that and would do so again within six months and 21.02 percent have increased other employee benefits. Almost four percent have not raised wages but will within six months. Almost one-third of respondents said they have asked employees about their COVID-19 vaccination status.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

New research out of Ohio State University (OSU) aims to shed light on how parenting styles were affected by the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic. Results of the study showed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents were most likely to use what researchers called "aggressive discipline" on their children when their daily stress levels were highest, usually late in the day. The study, which looked at parents in Central Ohio, measured stress levels three times a day for two weeks, and found that for each higher level of stress (rated from 1-10), parents had 1.3 times greater odds of using corporal punishment, such as shaking or spanking a child, or psychological aggression, such as trying to make the child feel ashamed. It wasn't overall levels of stress that mattered most, said Bridget Freisthler, lead author of the study and professor of social work at OSU. "It appears that general levels of stress are less important to how parents discipline their children than the stress they are feeling in the moment," Freisthler said. The study, published online recently in the *Journal of Family Violence*, can be found at <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10896-021-00340-y>.

CITIES

The Ohio Mayors Alliance announced Tuesday it is launching a new podcast series titled "Local Solutions. Statewide Impact." The monthly podcast will feature mayors from both parties discussing the challenges and opportunities of Ohio's cities and the importance of working together.

CIVIL RIGHTS

The Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission will hold its 37th annual commemorative celebration at noon on Thursday, Jan. 13, according to the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS), which provides administrative support to the commission. The celebration includes an award ceremony, with new criteria for the year. More information can be found at <https://das.ohio.gov/mlk>.

CORONAVIRUS

The more than 2,200 Ohio National Guard (ONG) members who have been deployed to the state's COVID-ravaged hospitals are making enormous sacrifices to ensure the health and safety of all Ohioans, Gov. Mike DeWine said Thursday. "We don't have a barracks where the Guard is waiting. They live their lives. So each person ... who is being deployed ... has left their family, left their home, left their job or left their college," DeWine said at Defense Supply Center Columbus, a military installation in Whitehall where ONG members are being processed. The governor and First Lady Fran DeWine met with a number of the soldiers at the facility before holding a press conference with Ohio Adjutant General John Harris to discuss the ONG's mission to provide relief to hospitals being overwhelmed with mostly unvaccinated COVID-19 patients.

Later on Thursday, the Central Ohio Trauma System (COTS) announced that all of Zone 2's hospitals have mutually agreed to postpone "non-essential" surgical procedures requiring an oversight stay through Friday, Jan. 21. COTS cited the "unprecedented surge of new COVID-19 cases in Central, Southeast and Southeast Central Ohio due to the more contagious Omicron variant" which "has stretched our hospital resources to the maximum." Zone 2 includes Wyandot, Crawford, Hardin, Logan, Marion, Morrow, Logan, Union, Delaware, Knox, Madison, Franklin, Licking, Fayette, Pickaway, Fairfield, Coshocton, Muskingum, Perry, Morgan, Hocking, Ross, Pike, Vinton, Athens, Meigs, Jackson, Pike, Scioto, Gallia, Lawrence, Washington, Noble, Monroe, Guernsey, Belmont, Harrison and Jefferson counties.

Statewide, the Ohio Hospital Association (OHA) reported 6,540 current hospitalizations for COVID-19 Thursday, a new record, while the number of ICU admissions dipped from 1,325 on Wednesday to 1,314.

ODH reported 19,442 new cases -- the sixth-highest figure -- along with 453 new hospitalizations and 43 ICU admissions. The month has already seen more than 115,000 cases reported. The 21-day averages are now 14,901 cases, 330 hospitalizations and 31 ICU admissions. There has been a total of 2.13 million cases in the state, 98,730 hospitalizations, 11,956 ICU admissions and 29,674 deaths, according to ODH.

The following COVID-19 developments occurred over the last couple of weeks:

- On the federal side, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) issued an emergency use authorization for the first antiviral pill to treat COVID-19 at home. Called Paxlovid and made by Pfizer, the drug is administered as three tablets taken together orally twice daily for

five days, for a total of 30 tablets. It was authorized to treat mild-to-moderate COVID-19 cases in those 12 years of age or older. An estimated 250,000 doses will be available from the Biden administration in January.

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) halved the recommended time for isolation from 10 days for people with COVID-19 to five days, if a person is asymptomatic. The federal agency said the change is motivated by science demonstrating that the majority of transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the one to two days prior to the onset of symptoms and the two to three days after.

- Gov. Mike DeWine late Monday announced that the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), the Ohio National Guard (ONG), and the Ohio Hospital Association (OHA) will expand COVID-19 testing locations in nine Ohio cities, including several new locations. The additional testing locations will be mobilized with support from Ohio National Guard personnel. The locations are intended to divert testing traffic from hospital emergency rooms.

- U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) announced that he tested positive for COVID-19 before his planned return to Washington, D.C. He is fully vaccinated and received a booster shot, and said he was asymptomatic.

CORRECTIONS

Over the holidays, Gov. Mike DeWine announced that he had approved a plan to help the Cuyahoga County Corrections Center (CCCC) with temporary staffing assistance from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) and the Ohio Military Reserve (OHMR). This was in response to a request from Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish and is due to staffing shortages at the jail from a re-emergence of COVID-19 cases.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The Ohio Legislature is vetting a criminal justice omnibus bill for introduction in January that incorporates the unanimous recommendations of the five-year-old Criminal Justice Recodification Committee and policy changes including "streamlined" judicial release, expanded earned inmate credits and simplified record sealing, and that could take on the erosion of definite sentencing over the last quarter century since 121-SB2 (Greenwood). Chairman Nathan Manning (R-N. Ridgeville) of the Senate Criminal Justice Committee and Majority Floor Leader Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) addressed the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission (OCSC) on the new omnibus bill.

ECONOMY

The Columbus Metropolitan Club (CMC) hosted a discussion on the economic forecast for 2022 Wednesday, with panelists offering their views on how the local economy could recover from the pandemic as well as the challenges that may impede growth. Bill LaFayette, owner of Regionomics, predicted there will be a 2.8 percent growth in local employment, totaling 30,100 new jobs. He expects increases in professional and technical services, transportation and the "catch-all" field of other services. State government employment declined in 2021 and is expected to drop again, though he said there may be less of a decline in 2022. National forecasts expect growth between 3.8 and 4 percent, but LaFayette said that implicitly assumes a level of workforce growth which could be "overly optimistic." The "workforce problem," along with the continued pandemic, remains "the big question mark" for area recovery after COVID.

EDUCATION

Ohio's EdChoice program which covers private school tuition violates the state's constitutional duty to provide a common education system and leads to racial segregation, local school district leaders said Tuesday in announcing a lawsuit meant to end the program. Local leaders and the Ohio Coalition for Equity and Adequacy of School Funding, which was involved in the landmark *DeRolph* litigation on school funding, have worked for more than a year to plan the lawsuit and build a coalition to support it. William Phillis, head of the equity and adequacy group, said 200 districts belong to the Vouchers Hurt Ohio group and 100 are supporting the lawsuit. The litigation itself, filed in Franklin County Common Pleas Court, lists as plaintiffs Columbus City Schools, Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools, Richmond Heights Local Schools, Lima City Schools, Barberton City Schools, the Ohio Coalition for Equity and Adequacy of School Funding, and Cleveland Heights students Malcolm McPherson and Fergus Donnelly, along with their parents. The lawsuit focuses on two sections of the Ohio Constitution. The first, Article VI, Section 2, obligates the General Assembly to "secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the state" and also states that "no religious sect, or sects, shall ever have any exclusive right to, or control of, any part of the school funds of this state." The second, Article I, Section 2, establishes Ohioans' rights to equal protection. Judge Jaiza Page of the Franklin County Common Pleas Court, a former Columbus City Council member halfway through her first term on the bench, will preside in the high-profile lawsuit.

Wendy Grove, director in the Office of Early Learning and School Readiness at the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), reported that preschool and kindergarten enrollment in Ohio has nearly reached pre-pandemic figures. Grove told the State Board of Education's (SBOE) Integrated Student Supports Committee that fall preschool enrollment was at 95 percent of pre-pandemic numbers and kindergarten enrollment was at 99 percent of pre-pandemic numbers.

ELECTIONS

In response to a request from the Seneca County Prosecutor Derek DeVine, Attorney General Dave Yost this week issued an opinion clarifying certain provisions of budget bill HB110 (Oelslager) prohibiting elections officials from collaborating with or accepting money from private entities to assist with elections administration. Senate Republicans inserted the language into the budget late in

the process, saying it takes aim at programs such as one offered by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg that gave grants to boards of elections during the 2020 election to assist in elections administration. The funds have been dubbed "Zuckerbucks" by detractors. Yost did not weigh in on certain scenarios, but noted a collaboration under its common definition would require a jointly administered project and would not affect situations where an elections official is acting in a private capacity.

ELECTIONS 2021

Secretary of State Frank LaRose said Wednesday that post-election audits of the 2021 general election conducted by county boards of elections are complete, with counties' using a percentage-based auditing showing a 99.9 percent accuracy rate. "The transparency of this process, conducted by election officials from both parties, and the accuracy of the audit results should reinforce every voter's belief that their vote mattered and was counted accurately. Ohioans can be proud that our state runs secure and fair elections," LaRose said.

ELECTIONS 2022

The gubernatorial primaries continued to take shape this week as Republican Joe Blystone announced that Iraq War veteran and former U.S. Marine Jeremiah Workman is his running mate. An author who was born in Marion County, Workman is a political newcomer like Blystone. In addition, former Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley Wednesday morning announced his selection of Sen. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo), a veteran of the General Assembly for more than 20 years, as his running mate, while former Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley announced her selection of Cuyahoga County Councilwoman Cheryl Stephens, a former mayor of Cleveland Heights, as her lieutenant governor.

With new districts created through the redistricting process to take effect this year, many incumbents will see new constituents, or will have to face off against one of their fellow lawmakers in order to keep their seat. *Hannah News* compiled a roundup of the new districts for the Ohio House, Senate, and Congress as created by the Ohio Redistricting Commission as it pertains to the General Assembly and SB258 (McColley) for the congressional districts. The information was based on home addresses of lawmakers that were filed with the secretary of state's office to run for their seats in 2020. It includes the current districts as they stand for the 134th General Assembly and 117th Congress, as well as the districts for the 135th General Assembly and the 118th Congress. Incumbents are listed for the next session to illustrate how the district would look today, though the filing deadlines are not until Wednesday, Feb. 2 for the General Assembly and Friday, March 4, for Congress. Some incumbents are also term-limited or have announced an intention to seek another office.

Sen. Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls), who is running for the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate, announced a series of town hall events this month and early next month in Hamilton, Washington, Knox, and Lucas counties. Dolan's campaign said he will hold events as part of the #OhioMatters Town Hall Tour, with the first occurring Tuesday, Jan. 11, at 5:30 p.m. at Blue Ash Recreation Center, 4433 Cooper Rd, Blue Ash. Other events will be held on Thursday, Jan. 13, at 5:30 p.m. at Washington County GOP Headquarters, 282 Front St, Marietta; Tuesday, Jan. 25, at 8:30 a.m. at Mount Vernon Grand Hotel, 12 Public Square, Mt. Vernon; and Thursday, Feb. 3, at 5:30 p.m. at Maumee Bay Brewing Company, 27 Broadway St, Toledo.

Republican gubernatorial candidate Jim Renacci attacked Gov. Mike DeWine's policies in a new ad that his campaign said has begun airing in markets statewide. The 30-second spot titled "DeWine's Reign of Terror," begins by tying "corruption, critical race theory, and illegals flooding into Ohio" to DeWine. Renacci says in the spot that "we need to stop Mike DeWine from dragging down Ohio."

Cincinnati Councilman Greg Landsman is expected to launch a campaign for the 1st Congressional District, according to the *Cincinnati Business Courier*. Landsman is seeking to take on U.S. Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Cincinnati), who has held the seat for all but two of the last 27 years.

ENVIRONMENT

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) is now accepting applications for recycling and litter prevention grants. The application deadline is Friday, Feb. 4 at 3 p.m.

A new study published recently by University of Toledo (UT) researchers suggests overuse of road salts to melt away snow and ice is threatening human health and the environment as they wash into drinking water sources. The study, titled "Road Salts, Human Safety, and the Rising Salinity of Our Fresh Waters," published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, also calls on policy makers and environmental managers to adopt a variety of solutions. The university notes that while usage varies by state, the amount of salt applied to icy roads annually in some regions can vary between approximately three and 18 pounds of salt per square meter, about the size of a small kitchen table. The study also found the use of deicing salts has tripled over the past 45 years, leading to dramatic increases of salt concentrations in streams, rivers, lakes, and other freshwater sources.

FEDERAL

Ohio's U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown recently detailed Ohio-related provisions in the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which was passed on Dec. 15. The military funding bill "mattered greatly for Ohio" and will support jobs in the state. He specifically highlighted support for Lima's Joint Systems Manufacturing Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Youngstown Air Reserve Station and installations in Springfield, Mansfield and Toledo. Brown also said the bill expands U.S. Department of Defense research funding at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), including Wilberforce University and Central State University in Ohio, through an amendment he offered.

A recent analysis by Pew Charitable Trusts found that federal grants to the states increased 93 percent from fiscal years 2008 to 2020, with much of that growth coming in the last year of that span due to federal COVID-19 relief funds. The analysis said that with relief packages passed in FY20 and FY21, COVID-19 funding is likely to "significantly alter state and local revenue and spending for years to come."

According to Pew, pandemic-related spending made up the largest share of federal grants in FY20 in eight states and was the second-largest in the rest. The coronavirus relief funding, which states used to address urgent needs such as coronavirus testing and housing assistance, supplemented the normal federal grants states receive. Those normal grants typically make up a third of state revenue and help pay for education, transportation, public safety, social services, environmental protection, and other programs, Pew said.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) said lower drug prices at community pharmacies are within reach during his first press conference of the new year Wednesday. Brown said a group of bipartisan lawmakers secured a commitment from Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, the administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), to make it easier for community pharmacies to lower drug prices for Ohioans by addressing direct and indirect remuneration (DIR) fees. This type of fee, Brown said, is often levied on

community pharmacies retroactively by middleman companies known as pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and have the effect of increasing the cost of prescription drugs for older Ohioans on Medicare and can make it harder for local pharmacies to serve their communities.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The House Democratic Caucus will meet next Wednesday, Jan. 12, to select a new minority leader, according to a caucus spokesperson. The leadership position opened after Rep. Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) announced last month that she would step down at the end of the year. She is term-limited at the end of this session and has reportedly been considering a run for Congress. Media reports indicate the Reps. Allison Russo (D-Columbus) and Thomas West (D-Canton) are vying for the position.

The House Democratic Caucus announced Tuesday that it will take applications until Friday, Jan. 14 to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of former Rep. Stephanie Howse (D-Cleveland), who joined Cleveland City Council this week. Rep. Dan. Troy (D-Willowick), the parliamentarian of the caucus, announced the process for filling Howse's 11th House District seat for the remainder of the session. The caucus said the District 11 office is open and fully staffed, and Rep. Juanita Brent (D-Cleveland) is assisting with constituent services until the vacancy is filled.

Ohio's newest lawmaker Rep. Latyna Humphrey (D-Columbus) told *Hannah News* that she always wanted to be a state legislator but was not sure how to get into politics. So, she said, she started volunteering locally and putting herself into positions where she could serve. Now, she says, she can make a bigger contribution statewide.

Edna Brown, who served in the Ohio House and Senate as well as on Toledo City Council, died early Saturday, Jan. 1 at the age of 81, according to the *Toledo Blade*. The news of her death led to fond remembrances by former colleagues. Brown's brother, Johnny Hutton, told the newspaper that the cause of death is unknown, though she had been battling health problems including respiratory issues. She died in her sleep at her South Toledo home. Brown retired from politics in 2018 after she was term-limited in the Senate. She was appointed to the Ohio House in 2002, replacing Jack Ford, who resigned to become Toledo mayor. Before that, she had served in Toledo City Council since first winning election in 1993.

Kenneth A. "Rocky" Yuko, son of Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Hts.), died on Wednesday, Dec. 29 at the age of 43, according to his obituary and a Facebook post by his father. Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima) and Assistant Minority Leader Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) introduced SR230 -- co-sponsored by the full Senate -- in memory of Yuko Monday.

Peter Shipley departed his position as communications director with the House Democratic Caucus and joined Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein's office in a similar role. With his departure, House Democratic Caucus Communications Director Maya Majikas is handling communications duties for the caucus.

GOVERNOR

Gov. Mike DeWine announced that he reappointed Kari Gunter-Seymour of Albany as the state's poet laureate. Gunter-Seymour's second term began Saturday, Jan. 1, 2022. "During her time as poet laureate, Kari Gunter-Seymour has offered insight and guidance for Ohio's literary artists," DeWine said in a statement. "Fran and I look forward to seeing her work continue as she enters into another term of creating connections through poetry with communities all across Ohio."

Gov. Mike DeWine Thursday, Dec. 30 signed HB169 (Cutrona-Swearingen), legislation distributing more than \$4 billion for schools, child care, health care, law enforcement, employment and other areas from three federal COVID relief measures spanning both the Biden and Trump administrations. He did line-item veto a Senate-added a provision in the bill that would have delayed quality standards for publicly funded child care under the Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) program.

Bills recently signed by the governor include the following:

HB29 (Wiggam-A. Miller) - To allow intercollegiate athletes to earn compensation from their name, image, or likeness, to legalize and regulate sports gaming in this state, to levy a tax on businesses that provide sports gaming, and to make other changes to the gambling law.

HB122 (Fraizer-Holmes) - To establish and modify requirements regarding the provision of telehealth services, to establish a provider

credentialing program within the Medicaid program, to revise the law governing the State Medical Board's One-Bite Program, and to extend the suspension of certain programs and requirements under the state's insurance laws until Jan. 1, 2026.

SB58 (Antonio-Brenner) - To permit a resident of a long-term care facility to conduct electronic monitoring of the resident's room and to designate this act as Esther's Law.

SB59 (Schaffer) - To prohibit certain war relics located on public property or cemetery association property from being disposed of, and to designate this act as the Ohio Veterans' Heritage Protection Act.

SB102 (Roegner) - To revise specified provisions of the liquor control law.

SB157 (Johnson-S. Huffman) - To require reports to be made after a child is born alive following an abortion or attempted abortion, to establish certain civil or criminal penalties for failing to preserve the health or life of such a child, and to make changes regarding variances from written transfer agreements.

SB162 (Reineke) - To expand the authority of the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission regarding evasion of tolls on the Ohio turnpike and disclosure of personal information, and to make changes to the title search conducted after a tow and the mechanisms of notice sent to a towed vehicle's owner.

SB166 (Reineke) - With regard to career-technical education, career awareness and exploration funds, the compensation of joint vocational school districts located in community reinvestment areas, the operation of the Northeast Ohio Medical University, and private certifications with respect to dental assistants, to make changes to the Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program, and to declare an emergency.

SB217 (Schaffer) - To modify the law regarding access to criminal record check information with respect to long-term care ombudsman programs, direct-care positions, community-based long-term care services, and certain persons serving as a municipal corporation tax administrator, and to declare an emergency.

Judicial appointment made during the week includes the following:

Gov. Mike DeWine named Xenia Municipal Court Judge Ronald C. Lewis to a vacancy on the Second District Court of Appeals created by the retirement of Judge Michael Hall. Lewis will assume office Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022 and must run for election in November to keep the seat.

Governor's Appointments:

- Kimberly Annette Thomas of Richmond Heights (Cuyahoga County) and Jessica Price-Kovach of Galloway (Franklin County) reappointed to the State Cosmetology and Barber Board for terms beginning Dec. 30, 2021 and ending Oct. 31, 2026.

- Raymond Michael Mancino of Youngstown (Mahoning County) reappointed to the Ohio Athletic Commission for a term beginning Dec. 30, 2021 and ending Sept. 2, 2024.

- Christopher Matthew Fleming of Ashville (Pickaway County) reappointed to the Ohio Landscape Architects Board for a term beginning Dec. 30, 2021 and ending Nov. 9, 2026.

- Susan Jean Pohler of Columbus (Franklin County) and Nancy O'Connor of Akron (Summit County) reappointed to the State Veterinary Medical Licensing Board for terms beginning Jan. 1, 2022 and ending Dec. 31, 2024.

- John Scott Walkenhorst of Lebanon (Warren County) and Timothy Leland Kolb of Delaware (Delaware County) to the State Veterinary Medical Licensing Board for terms beginning Jan. 1, 2022 and ending Dec. 31, 2022 and Dec. 31, 2024, respectively.

- Sarah Heldmann of Toledo (Lucas County) and Cheryl Osborn VanHoose of Dayton (Montgomery County) to the Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Athletic Trainers Board for terms beginning Jan. 1, 2022 and ending Aug. 27, 2024.

- James Harry Cottle of Westerville (Delaware County) reappointed to the Dentist Loan Repayment Advisory Board for a term beginning Jan. 29, 2022 and ending Jan. 28, 2024.

- Briana Kaye Lusheck of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2022 and ending April 21, 2024.

- Jeremy A. Gutierrez of Powell (Delaware County) and Jason E. Wells of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Minority Development Financing Advisory Board for terms beginning Dec. 30, 2021 and ending Sept. 30, 2028.

- Heidi M. Samuel of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Ohio History Connection Board of Trustees for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2022 and ending June 26, 2022.

- George B. Limbert of Lewis Center (Delaware County) and Paul Michael Koontz of Liberty Township (Butler County) to the TourismOhio Advisory Board for terms beginning Jan. 1, 2022 and ending Sept. 27, 2023 and Sept. 27, 2024, respectively.

- David J. Wondoloski of Broadview Heights (Cuyahoga County) to the Public Utilities Commission Nominating Council for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2022 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.

- Mike Barhorst of Sidney (Shelby County) to the State Emergency Response Commission for a term beginning Jan. 14, 2022 and ending Jan. 13, 2024.

- William Wolf of Ottawa Hills (Lucas County) reappointed to the Ohio Lake Erie Commission for a term beginning Dec. 30, 2021 and ending Sept. 1, 2024.

- Matthew Lane of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Sewage Treatment System Technical Advisory Committee for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2022 and ending Dec. 31, 2024.

GREAT LAKES

More than 55 percent of the region's residents are prepared to pay at least \$5 more on their monthly water bill to fund efforts to achieve swimmable, fishable and drinkable water in the Great Lakes, according to the International Joint Commission's (IJC) Great Lakes Water Quality Board (WQB) 2021 Great Lakes Regional Poll.

HIGHER EDUCATION

President Joe Biden announced his administration is extending through May 1 the pause on repayment of federal student loans. Biden initiated the pause at the outset of the administration in light of the economic damage to the economy from the COVID pandemic, initially through September 2021, then through January 2022.

A release from the Ohio Department of Development (DOD) encourages Ohio businesses to participate in the state's Export Internship Program, which links them with knowledgeable college students who can help start or expand international initiatives. DOD will also reimburse half the interns' wages. The application period is open now and submissions will be reviewed through Tuesday, Feb. 1, with the internships running from May to August 2022.

Youngstown State University (YSU) announced that Kelly Wilkinson, associate dean of the Scott College of Business at Indiana State University, has been named the new dean of YSU's Williamson College of Business Administration, effective Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2022.

The University of Akron (UA) School of Law (Akron Law) has named Emily Janoski-Haehlen as the next dean, beginning on Monday, Feb. 21, 2022, pending approval by the UA Board of Trustees. Janoski-Haehlen currently serves as associate dean of academic affairs and law technology programs for Akron Law, as well as director of the Law Library. She joined the faculty in 2017, teaching technology in law, social media law, legal drafting and legal research. Her current research explores social media law, Internet privacy, legal research instruction strategies and technology in the practice of law.

Dixie Jeffers, Capital University's head women's basketball coach and interim athletic director (AD), announced her retirement after 35 years with the university. Jeffers' retirement became effective at the end of 2021.

The U.S. Department of Education awarded Bowling Green State University (BGSU) an \$814,000 grant to support students who are parents and seeking either an undergraduate or graduate degree, including those enrolled in eCampus. Available to Pell Grant-eligible students at the Bowling Green and Huron campuses through the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, the funding will address child care costs, programming and student success initiatives over a four-year period.

With rising COVID-19 numbers in Ohio and across the county, Ohio universities are beginning to detail plans for stemming the spread of the virus. The University of Cincinnati (UC) is began its spring semester with online classes due to the "recent increases in local, state, and national COVID-19 cases, and the high transmission rate of the Omicron variant," the school said. The university plans to pivot back to full in-person activities on Monday, Jan. 24. Ohio State University (OSU) announced Tuesday a rapid antigen COVID-19 test will be required for students returning to campus who are living in residence halls on the Columbus campus and for those living in fraternity and sorority off-campus chapter houses. OSU also detailed plans for weekly testing of all students living in university housing and those in social sororities and fraternities, regardless of vaccination status. The university said it will require weekly testing both of employees and students with a COVID-19 vaccination exemption and of those who have not received a vaccine.

Anthony "Tony" Ponder has been named the next provost of Sinclair Community College, effective Tuesday, Feb. 1. Ponder joined the Dayton-area community college in 1991 as an instructor in the Mathematics Department. He earned tenure in 1996 and was promoted to professor in 2005. In 2007, Ponder was appointed chair of the Mathematics Department and since August 2012, he has served as dean of the Division of Science, Mathematics & Engineering.

The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) announced Thursday that Ohio students seeking to obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL) will be able to receive financial aid under the Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program, which was created as part of the budget, HB110 (Oelslager) and has additional parameters under SB166 (Reineke). It received a total of \$5 million, with the goal of increased enrollment in CDL programs. Funds awarded to eligible institutions through a competitive application process will be disbursed as grants and loans to students who enroll in approved CDL training programs at those institutions. The institutions can request up to \$200,000 per year to support their programs, and students receiving the funds must commit to residing and working in Ohio for a minimum of one year after completion.

Youngstown State University (YSU) announced it is set to receive a \$2.3 million research and development award from the Air Force Research Laboratory to create a "hub-and-spoke" consortium on hybrid manufacturing. The consortium includes the National Center for Defense Manufacturing and Machining (the managing organization for Youngstown-based America Makes), and Oak Ridge National Laboratory, among others, and will focus on further advancing work to fabricate, inspect and repair metallic machine parts, molds and dies, as well as defense components.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

November home sales increased by 5.5 percent compared to November 2020, according to the Ohio Realtors. Sales reached 14,290, compared to 13,545 in November 2020. The average price of \$240,211 was 10.1 percent higher than the average of \$218,140 a year earlier.

JUDICIAL

In a five-way split, the Ohio Supreme Court has rejected FirstEnergy's claim that municipal power companies violate the Ohio Constitution by selling a single purchased kilowatt outside their city limits and within the statutorily protected territories of local electric distribution utilities (EDU). Upholding the 8th District Court of Appeals, Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor and Justices Melody Stewart and Jennifer

Brunner say only that Cleveland Public Power and other municipal utilities may not buy electricity for the "sole purpose" of reselling it within EDU territory or acquire an "artificial surplus" of energy in order to serve as a power "broker." *Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. v. City of Cleveland, et al.* has blossomed into a major turf war between the utility industry, including FirstEnergy, American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio, Duke Energy Ohio, AES Ohio, Ohio Rural Electric Cooperatives and Buckeye Power, Inc., on the one hand, and Cleveland Public Power (CPP), Cuyahoga County, the cities of Cleveland and Brooklyn, American Municipal Power (AMP) Ohio, Ohio Municipal Electric Association (OMEA) and Ohio

Municipal League (OML), on the other. Equally diverse are justices' legal theories.

Ohio's inter-governmental battle over "video service" fees awaits its day in court as municipal stakeholders accuse Netflix and Hulu of withholding revenues from cities and townships and the state charges local officials with encroachment on the Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC). The Ohio Supreme Court case is part of a larger national debate over the mass exodus of consumer TV viewing from traditional cable channels and related infrastructure to web-based vendors that stream lucrative programming over independent Internet service providers (ISP). Leading the charge, the Cleveland suburb of Maple Heights filed a federal suit against Netflix and Hulu in August 2020, prompting the U.S. District Court for Northern District of Ohio to certify the following questions to the Supreme Court last

July: (1) "Are Netflix and Hulu video service providers under Ohio law?" (2) Can Maple Heights sue Netflix and Hulu to enforce Ohio's video service provider provisions?"

Justice R. Patrick DeWine is accusing his colleagues on the Ohio Supreme Court of casting aside state and federal precedent, violating victims' rights under the constitutional amendment Marsy's Law, and endangering Ohioans by eliminating public safety concerns from bail determinations and by lowering bail for an aggravated robbery/murder suspect to one third of the amount set by the trial judge. A sharply divided Court led by Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor took over *de novo* review of Justin Dubose's million-dollar bail reduction from an initial \$1.5 million to the \$500,000 ordered by the 1st District after the three-judge panel denied Hamilton County Municipal Court Curt Kissinger discretion in setting bail. Emboldened by the Ohio Supreme Court's recent ruling in *Mohamed v. Eckelberry* (2020), the appeals court reconsidered and overturned Kissinger's decision without an evidentiary hearing and without the victim's family members present.

LIQUOR/ALCOHOL

The Ohio Investigative Unit's (OIU) Alcohol Server Knowledge (ASK) program is now available online.

Previously, agents with the liquor law enforcement arm of the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) and Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) had only offered ASK training sessions in person at community centers and liquor permit premises, according to OIU. Much like the in-person class, the online training course includes information on alcohol sales, false identification, signs of human trafficking, tobacco sales, food stamp fraud, trace-back investigations, labeling and refilling, among other topics. The participant must watch videos and go through each topic before they can complete the course. The topics have scenarios and questions relating to the segments, and a comprehensive exam at the end. Once the participant has successfully completed the course, they are presented with a certificate.

LOBBYISTS

High Bridge Consulting, an Ohio-based consulting firm that serves clients in both political and non-political settings across the U.S., announced that Spencer Gross has been named partner. Gross had previously held the role of vice president of government affairs at the firm.

Willa Ebersole announced the launch of her new company: Ebersole Advocates, LLC. Ebersole has over 30 years of experience working with the Ohio Legislature and several administrations. The new firm will represent business and association clients in the areas of health care, technology and environment, according to the announcement.

The CJR Group Inc. announced recently that Brittany Warner has been named president. Josh Rubin will continue as chief executive officer. Rubin founded the CJR Group two decades ago. The firm specializes in government advocacy and public relations at both the state and federal levels of government, and represents a wide variety of entities, from smaller nonprofit organizations to major multinational corporations.

Ohio Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Steve Stivers said Tuesday that the Ohio Chamber of Commerce PAC (OCCPAC) raised over \$212,000 in 2021 -- more than four times the total amount the PAC has ever raised before in one year. OCCPAC has a cash-on-hand balance of over \$220,000, with Stivers saying that in less than a year, the Ohio Chamber PAC has more than tripled

what would historically be raised for an entire two-year cycle.

MARIJUANA/HEMP

The Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol's (CRMLA) first signature submission fell short, according to the Ohio Secretary of State's Office. The group will now need to collect 13,062 more valid signatures by Thursday, Jan. 13 in order to transmit its initiated statute to the General Assembly, Secretary of State Frank LaRose wrote in a letter to campaign attorneys Don McTigue and John Oberle. In late December 2021, CRMLA submitted 206,943 signatures supporting its proposed law, which would legalize the use of cannabis by individuals age 21 and older.

MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM

Paramount Advantage, the Medicaid managed care plan that sued over its exclusion from a new round of state contracts in the latest round of bidding, reached a deal to transfer its existing contract to Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, one of the new managed care plans joining the fold when a redesigned system goes live in FY23. If the deal is approved, Paramount said it will end its litigation against the state. Anthem announced its acquisition of the Paramount contract just before the Christmas holiday; it is subject to approval by the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) and comes with federal and state filing requirements, the company said.

MENTAL HEALTH

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) announced it awarded \$5 million in grants to local community behavioral health centers (CBHCs) to provide staff retention bonuses.

The one-time awards of up to \$50,000 went to 115 organizations certified by the department, which were able to use the money for medical, administrative, credentialed, non-credentialed and peer recovery support staff performing their duties amid the COVID-19 public health emergency. Funding came from the federal CARES Act. Employees are eligible for up to \$2,500 and must commit to remaining with their employer for at least a year from receipt of the money.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is encouraging individuals to complete the Ohio State Parks 2022 "Winter Hike Challenge" this season. To complete the challenge, people can download the DETOUR Ohio Trails App, available at detour.ohiodnr.gov or in the Apple app or Google Play store. The challenge is to complete hikes at state parks in three different regions of Ohio by Tuesday, March 1.

All sorts of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife can find a use for a live-cut Christmas tree now that the holidays are over, according to the ODNR Division of Wildlife. Recycled live-cut Christmas trees are used as fish habitat in both public and private waters. Christmas trees are donated to the ODNR Division of Wildlife by community recycling and drop-off programs. The trees are bundled together and weighted down so they sink to the bottom, attracting fish and providing cover. A live-cut Christmas tree can also be recycled as the centerpiece of a wildlife-friendly brush pile.

PENSIONS

With good news in its most recent valuation report and a desire to help both retirees and active members, the board of the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) of Ohio is analyzing potential changes to its benefit structure. Cheiron, actuarial consultant to the board, has been presenting potential tweaks to contribution rates, cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) amounts and retirement age requirements.

After presenting a broad list of options earlier in the fall, Cheiron provided six options at the December meeting based on board members' feedback and was asked to further analyze a few of them.

Retirees in the School Employees Retirement System (SERS) are receiving cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) at the statutory maximum this year. State law matches annual COLA changes to inflation, specifically the change in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners (CPI-W) for the prior fiscal year, with a cap of 2.5 percent. The index exceeded the cap, meaning the board set the COLA at 2.5 percent. The board has the authority to deviate from the CPI-W to maintain the financial stability of SERS, but the system said its actuary determined a full 2.5 percent COLA would not materially impair the system.

PEOPLE

The Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) announced that Bill Faith, its longtime executive director, plans to retire in six months. Faith joined COHHIO as its founding director in 1994 after serving as director of the Ohio Coalition for the Homeless since 1986.

The Franklin County Board of Commissioners Monday selected Erica Crawley to serve as president for 2022. Crawley was appointed to the board in July following the retirement of long-time commissioner Marilyn Brown. Crawley previously represented the 26th Ohio House District in the southeastern portion of Franklin County and is a U.S. Navy veteran. She is the first Black woman to serve on the board and the first to serve as board president.

Deputy Attorney General Jonathan Blanton, a member of Attorney General Dave Yost's executive team, has been named the National Association of Attorneys General's (NAAG) 2021 Senior Staff of the Year.

Yost announced the award Thursday as "one of a handful" bestowed annually by NAAG. He said Blanton's work ethic and dedication

to Ohioans culminated last fall in the \$808 million settlement hammered out by the AG's office with the country's three largest opioid distributors.

POLLS/STUDIES

One year ago supporters of former President Donald Trump attempted to stop the certification of the 2020 presidential election by breaching the U.S. Capitol. Despite the ongoing investigation into the riot and new information that has come to light, national polls show many Americans' views on the Jan. 6 insurrection have changed little in the past year, and for Americans whose views have changed, the insurrection is less of a priority for them. A new Axios-Momentive poll, conducted Jan. 1-3 of this year with a national sample of 2,649 adults, shows little movement in Americans' perception of the 2020 presidential election. The poll found 55 percent of respondents accepted President Joe Biden legitimately won the election, essentially unchanged from the 58 percent of respondents who accepted Biden's win a year ago in a similar poll.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS) announced recently that its Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) has added Brooklyn Police Department (Cuyahoga County), Westfield OFIC (Medina County), Sugarcreek Township (Greene County) and Junction (Perry County) police to law enforcement agencies certified under state standards for officer use of force, including deadly force, and agency recruitment and hiring. Of roughly 900 state, county and local law enforcement agencies, 548 now meet state standards developed by the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board, while another 11 are undergoing certification.

Initial reports from the Ohio State Highway Patrol showed fewer roadway deaths this Christmas compared to last. During the four-day reporting period of Thursday through Sunday, Dec. 23-26, 2021, seven people died in seven crashes; three were not wearing a seat belt, the patrol said. In 2020, nine people died over a four-day holiday period; in 2019, 12 died in a two-day period.

The Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA) announced Tuesday that it will accept applications for the Ohio Safe Room Rebate Program through Friday, Feb. 4. The program offers rebates of up to 75 percent for the cost of purchase, construction or installation of a tornado safe room inside or outside homes. The award is capped at a maximum of \$4,875.

REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT

During oral arguments Tuesday, Dec. 28 on two lawsuits challenging the new congressional map established by SB258 (McColley), justices of the Ohio Supreme Court questioned the metrics each side is using to determine how competitive the map is, the splits of Hamilton and Cuyahoga counties under the map, and how much the previous Supreme Court decision on redistricting should factor into these cases.

The Court heard arguments virtually in *Adams v. DeWine et al.* and *League of Women Voters v. Ohio Redistricting Commission et. al.*, with plaintiff attorneys arguing that the map unduly favors Ohio Republicans, and the attorney for House Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima) saying Ohioans asked for and received a competitive map through SB258.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Secretary of State Frank LaRose said recently that early in November, Ohioans broke the annual new business filings record set in 2020 with almost two full months remaining to create a new business. The total number of new businesses created in November is 13,754, a 13 percent increase over last November's filing numbers. Ohioans have so far submitted a total of 184,494 new business filings this year. Last year's record for all of 2020 was 171,073 new filings.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Effective Saturday, Jan. 1, Ohio's minimum wage rose to \$9.30 per hour for non-tipped employees and \$4.65 per hour for tipped employees at businesses whose annual gross receipts exceed \$342,000 per year. Workers at companies below that amount and those age 14 or 15 must be paid at least \$7.25, in line with the federal minimum. The increase is the result of the 2006 constitutional amendment and based on the increased Consumer Price index.

TAXATION

The Ohio Department of Taxation (ODT) announced Monday that it was ready to receive W-2 files from employers and payroll providers and 1099-R files from retirement system administrators. These are required to be electronically submitted on the Ohio Business Gateway, and ODT said there is a new simplified upload process available. W-2 files can also be submitted through the "EFW2 layout utilized by the Social Security Administration, with certain modifications" for ODT. The 1099-R file must be submitted using the layout required by the IRS in its Publication 1220. Users who sign into the gateway should have the option to access the W-2/1099-R upload service, ODT said. Information is also available at <https://tinyurl.com/4y5xm69x>.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

The Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) rejected 827 license plate requests in 2021, including a number of apparent profane references to President Joe Biden. There were even more directed toward "JB," "Joe" or "46." Another rejected plate was a profane reference to Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases; anti-police plate requests were denied as well. Three were presumably in regard to the Environmental Protection Agency, while one said "F PETROL."

UNIONS

Tim Ryan's U.S. Senate campaign announced it has reached an agreement with IBEW Local 1466, the union representing staff in the campaign's bargaining unit. Campaign staff voted unanimously to ratify their first union contract, becoming the first U.S. Senate race in Ohio history to do so, the Ryan campaign said. The campaign announced last year that it was voluntarily recognizing a staff union organized with IBEW Local 1466 after all bargaining unit-eligible employees signed union cards.

UTILITIES

A left-leaning coalition including Our Revolution Ohio is reaching back to the Standard Oil Company's federal anti-trust case against of 1892 to urge that Attorney General Dave Yost permanently revoke FirstEnergy's right to do business in Ohio under R.C. 2733. The Bernie Sanders-inspired Our Revolution has joined the National Community Rights Network, Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, Ohio Community Rights Network, Move to Amend Ohio Network, and Athens Friends Meeting in issuing the call for *quo warranto* action against Ohio Edison Company, Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company and Toledo Edison Company for violating their statutory charter. "Corporations that break the law and do so with intent should not simply be fined, as FirstEnergy Corp. has been, but have their charters revoked or terminated," the coalition states in a Jan. 3 letter to Yost. "Every day, we see that monetary fines do not change criminal corporate behavior. FirstEnergy has forfeited its public privilege to exist."

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) said that public employers in Ohio will save nearly \$17 million in workers' compensation premiums through a 10 percent rate cut that went into effect Jan. 1. BWC's board approved the cut in September. BWC has lowered rates for public employers 13 times since 2009, and 11 times for private employers since 2008.

WORKFORCE

Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, director of the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation (OWT), announced the latest round of Industry Sector Partnership (ISP) grants Thursday, with 13 workforce partnerships receiving a total of \$2.58 million. They focus on "multiple in-demand industry sectors, including information technology, manufacturing, health care, transportation and aerospace," according to OWT.