

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 - 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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

SB15 FISCAL OFFICERS-LIABILITY *(WILSON S)*

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

SB32 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION (RULLI M)

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

SB56 INDEMNITY-DESIGN CONTRACTS (BLESSING III L)

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

4/21/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance

SB169 PROHIBIT MANDATORY VACCINATIONS *(BRENNER A)*

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

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

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

SB209 MASK MANDATES *(BRENNER A)*

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

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

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

Week in Review

Friday, Sept. 17, 2021

AGING

Reps. Daniel Troy (D-Willowick) and Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) Friday announced they have introduced HB419, bipartisan legislation aimed at protecting Ohio's growing senior population from abuse, neglect and exploitation by improving mandatory abuse reporting laws. The sponsors said the bill establishes a mechanism for levying and enforcing penalties against those who knowingly fail to report instances of abuse, neglect and exploitation against senior citizens.

AGRICULTURE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) has confirmed the presence of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) in wild white-tailed deer in Ohio. "These are the first deer confirmed with the SARS-CoV-2 virus worldwide, although earlier studies have shown both that deer can be experimentally infected with the virus and that some wild deer had antibodies to the virus," USDA said.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

The ticket reseller StubHub is issuing refunds to thousands of Ohioans who purchased tickets to events that were later cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic in response to a multistate investigation led by Ohio Attorney General (AG) Dave Yost. "We'd all like a refund from the ride COVID has taken us on, but in this case there was written policy not followed," Yost said. According to the AG's office, Ohio, nine other states and the District of Columbia initiated a coordinated investigation after receiving numerous complaints from consumers that StubHub was violating its own policy under the "FanProtect Guarantee."

Ohio Attorney General (AG) Dave Yost Thursday announced the completion of an \$808 million settlement with the three largest

distributors of opioids. Under the agreement, Ohio cities and counties could begin receiving the funds as early as November, and the money is guaranteed even if the national agreement doesn't come to fruition. Ohio would have gone to trial on Monday, Sept. 20 had a deal not been reached. The distributors, Cardinal Health, McKesson and AmerisourceBergen, will be required to pay a continuous annual flow of settlement money over 18 years. While the companies can pay extra in a given year or "pre-pay," any additional money would come off the back end so there is no disruption in payments. The distributors have also agreed to pay the state's attorney's fees on top of the settlement, meaning the settlement amount will not be reduced by legal fees. The OneOhio plan, first announced last March has been incorporated into the settlement, Yost said, with 85 percent of the settlement money going to local distribution: 30 percent of the money is earmarked for local community recovery programs and the majority, 55 percent, will go to a foundation created to disburse the money and fund programs that help those affected by the opioid epidemic or prevent addiction. The remaining 15 percent goes to the state of Ohio.

BUSINESS/CORPORATE

Ohio responses in the U.S. Census Bureau's "Small Business Pulse Survey" updated Thursday largely followed national responses on how they have been affected overall by the pandemic. From Sept. 6-12, 68.9 percent of Ohio small businesses said they were negatively affected at either a "large" or "moderate" level, compared with 67.2 percent nationally. Around 22 percent of Ohio small businesses and 24 percent of national ones saw "little or no effect," while positive effects were reported by 9 percent for Ohio and 8.6 percent for the country. The state and national data on whether businesses had a change in the number of employees ran even closer together, with around 80.6 reporting no change, 11.7 reporting a decrease and 7.6 an increase.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

State leaders can take numerous, cost-effective steps to prevent stresses and traumas that can affect children's wellbeing in the long term, according to a recent policy brief from the Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO). HPIO has been releasing a series of reports on the effects of adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, and in the latest, "Adverse Childhood Experiences: A strategic approach to prevent ACEs in Ohio," it reviews a dozen prevention strategies.

Kindergartners from low-income families spent more than six hours a day in front of screens during two early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, a study out of Ohio State University (OSU) suggests. That figure is nearly double the screen time found before the pandemic in similar children, according to other research. Caregivers from low-income households may have faced more difficulties than those from more advantaged families in managing the time their children spent watching TV and using computers, phones and tablets when child care was shut down, according to the researchers.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Leaders of the Ohio Conference of the NAACP and its regional affiliates around the state Friday strongly opposed legislative proposals to curtail early voting and criticized the draft maps now before the Ohio Redistricting Commission as unfair and out of line with voters who backed redistricting reform. "The NAACP has been on the forefront to fight voter suppression. Here we thought HB294 was a bad bill ... and lo and behold some legislators introduced HB387, which is a draconian bill that takes us back to where we've been fighting all these years to not be. We will oppose that legislation, we will testify against it," said Tom Roberts, a former state senator from Dayton who now serves as president of the Ohio NAACP, during a press conference held as part of its two-day state convention in Columbus.

CORONAVIRUS

Although Ohio's trend of rising daily COVID-19 cases showed no sign of stopping Friday, Gov. Mike DeWine, though a vocal supporter of vaccination, said he's not on board with President Joe Biden's proposal to use Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations to mandate vaccinations at larger businesses.

Dozens of House members signed on to a letter urging Attorney General Dave Yost to pursue "every legal recourse" to block the Biden administration's plan to use OSHA authority to require vaccination or regular COVID testing at larger businesses. On social media, Rep. Kyle Koehler (R-Springfield) said his office delivered the letter Friday to Yost with 50 representatives' signatures. They include GOP caucus leaders such as Speaker Pro Tem Tim Ginter (R-Salem), Majority Floor Leader Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati), Assistant Majority Floor Leader Rick Carfagna (R-Westerville), Majority Whip Don Jones (R-Freeport) and Assistant Whip Cindy Abrams (R-Harrison). Koehler's post on Facebook said additional House members indicated they were writing their own letters.

Ohio's six children's hospitals and many of the state's adult hospitals are overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients, and that's largely because roughly half of Ohio's school districts aren't requiring masks, Gov. Mike DeWine and leaders from the Ohio Children's Hospital Association (OCHA) said Tuesday. "The data are now clear that there is a higher level of COVID-19 in school districts where masks are not required," DeWine said during the Zoom press conference. "If we want our schools to stay open, the best way to do that is for those 12 and over to get vaccinated. But because those under 12 are still too young to be vaccinated, we need students who come in to school to wear a mask until we get through this." DeWine was joined by OCHA President and CEO Nick Lashutka, Dayton Children's Hospital President and CEO Debbie Feldman, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Chief of Staff Dr. Patty Manning, Nationwide Children's Hospital Chief Medical Officer Dr. Rustin Morse and ProMedica Russell J. Ebeid Children's Hospital Chief Nursing Officer Paula Grieb.

In his latest briefing with hospital officials on Thursday, Sept. 16, Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Bruce Vanderhoff warned that the state is becoming "worryingly close" to making decisions on prioritizing care, a task they never want to have to perform.

"Hospitals are being stretched toward capacity," he said, adding that is both because of "high numbers" of COVID-19 hospitalizations and staffing challenges. "... Hospitals are having to make difficult decisions and implement plans that alleviate that pressure on their systems and their staff." Vanderhoff said those plans have included rescheduling elective procedures, diverting patients to other hospitals and implementing patient visitation policies. Some hospitals have even temporarily reached full capacity.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Ohio's current sentencing structure, created by 121-SB2 (Greenwood) and several other bills tinkering with the law in the years since its implementation, needs comprehensive reform to improve confidence in the criminal justice system, judges said during an Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission (OCSC) meeting on Thursday. Ohio Eighth District Court of Appeals Judge John Gallagher said the General Assembly should "immediately repeal SB2," adding that he doesn't doubt the law was passed with good intentions, but lamenting that it has "failed miserably."

DEATH PENALTY

Gov. Mike DeWine issued a fourth reprieve Friday to condemned inmate Warren K. Henness for a lack of available drugs to carry out Ohio's lethal injection procedure, while also delaying the execution of the following three other Death Row inmates:

- Stanley T. Adams, scheduled to die Feb. 16, 2022, now has an execution date of Feb. 19, 2025.
- John E. Drummond, scheduled to die April 21, 2022, now has an execution date of April 16, 2025.
- James G. Hannah, scheduled to die May 18, 2022, now has an execution date of May 14, 2025.

EDUCATION

The State Board of Education (SBOE) was mostly within its rights to order reviews and training related to racism and implicit bias but lacks authority to extend that to all contractors working for the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Attorney General Dave Yost's office wrote in a formal opinion to the board Tuesday. He cautioned that those reviews and the content of the training could end up getting the board in trouble.

ODE announced recently that 68 schools will be honored with the Purple Star Award this school year. The award recognizes a school's commitment to serving and supporting students and families connected to the U.S. armed forces and Ohio National Guard. A full list of honorees can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/tkxmprk3>.

Half of lower income or Hispanic parents and 39 percent of all parents reported at least one of their children fell behind academically as a result of the pandemic, with online learning associated with even greater issues, according to recent results from the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) Vaccine Monitor poll. More than a third of parents said a child fell behind in social-emotional development, and 29 percent reported mental health or behavioral problems in their child.

ELECTIONS 2021

Secretary of State Frank LaRose Monday broke a tie vote by the Hamilton County Board of Elections that will allow Rep. Tom Brinkman (R-Cincinnati) to appear on the November ballot for Cincinnati City Council, along with a Democrat, despite a missing date on their candidate petitions. In both cases, Brinkman and Te'Airea Powell failed to provide a date on the Statement of the Circulator section of their petitions. Earlier this month, the Hamilton County Board of Elections split, with Democrats voting against certification of the petitions for council and Republicans voting in favor.

A 34-year-old nonprofit executive and the president of Cleveland City Council were the top vote earners in a primary held Tuesday for Cleveland mayor; they will face off in November. According to unofficial results, Justin Bibb, the youngest candidate among the seven in the primary, earned 27.14 percent of the vote, while second-place finisher Kevin Kelley, the president of Cleveland City Council, earned 19.39 percent of the vote. Former Cleveland Mayor and Congressman Dennis Kucinich was third with 16.54 percent, while Sen. Sandra Williams (D-Cleveland) came in sixth with 11.43 percent.

In other races on Cleveland's primary ballot, Rep. Stephanie Howse (D-Cleveland) finished first in an 11-person primary for Cleveland Council Ward 7, getting 28.68 percent of the vote and will face second-place finisher, T.J. Dow, who earned 25.11 percent. Both Howse and Dow formerly held the seat, with Dow having defeated Howse for the seat in 2008.

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- Ohio Right to Life PAC and National Right to Life endorsed Mike Carey for Congress.
- The League of Conservation Voters (LCV) Action Fund endorsed Allison Russo and Shontel Brown for Congress.

ELECTIONS 2022

Mothers from across Ohio detailed how schools' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc on their lives and the lives of their children at a virtual roundtable Monday hosted by Dayton Mayor and Democratic candidate for governor Nan Whaley. Whaley said keeping schools open and students learning in-person should be a priority and that the mounting number of schools that are temporarily closing or moving to remote learning in recent weeks due to the spread of COVID-19 is evidence that Gov. Mike DeWine should issue a statewide school mask mandate.

Four of Ohio's big city mayors endorsed their Dayton counterpart, Democrat Nan Whaley, for governor Thursday. The announcement

gives Whaley support from "the four largest cities that are, sort of, in play for an endorsement in this race" as Toledo Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz put it -- a reference to Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley, also a Democratic candidate for governor. Kapszukiewicz was joined by Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan, Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther and Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson in an online press conference to announce the endorsements. They cited Whaley's leadership of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, her role in founding the Ohio Mayors Alliance and the experience she's had working with others to achieve results.

Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley, also a Democratic candidate for governor, traveled to Cuyahoga County for an endorsement event this week with Highland Hills Mayor Michael Booker, Woodmere Mayor Ben Holbert and Warrensville Heights Mayor Brad Sellers.

Ohio Supreme Court Justice Jennifer Brunner Tuesday outlined her platform for chief justice, saying she would look to build upon many of the initiatives of current Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor as well as to increasing access to justice and identifying systemic racism in the criminal justice system. The only Democrat so far to announce a campaign to become chief justice after O'Connor is forced to retire due to age limits, Brunner will likely face fellow Justice Sharon Kennedy, who has the endorsement of the Ohio Republican Party, on next year's ballot.

Republican gubernatorial candidate Joe Blystone announced on social media that his campaign manager Joanna Swallen is leaving the campaign for unnamed personal reasons.

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- The gubernatorial campaign of Nan Whaley announced the endorsement of the Dayton Building & Construction Trades Council.
- The U.S. Senate campaign of J.D. Vance announced the endorsement of U.S. Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO).

ENERGY

Former Michigan governor and now U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm rolled out the Biden administration's Local Energy Action Program (LEAP) Wednesday to help coal-rich Appalachia and other low-income communities embrace renewable generation and "environmental justice" as pathways to social equity. Granholm said "Communities LEAP" will work to transition the U.S. to a carbon-free economy, reduce air pollution, increase energy resilience, lower "energy burdens" and utility costs and create good-paying jobs for underprivileged Americans.

ENVIRONMENT

The Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (OAQDA) has announced a new "Green Bonds" program to meet the environmental and economic needs of Ohio businesses and communities. "The new initiative is anticipated to diversify and expand the pool of national and local investors for development projects focused on sustainability in the state of Ohio," OAQDA said. Green Bonds issued by OAQDA will conform to the agency's recently-released "Green Bonds Framework," which is aligned with internationally-recognized financial market standards, OAQDA said. The bonds can finance projects that address renewable energy, energy efficiency, electric vehicle or alternative fuel infrastructure, recycling or waste disposal and/or mitigation of harmful air pollution.

FEDERAL

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) continued his push for the passage of the bipartisan infrastructure bill he helped craft while speaking with reporters Tuesday. The U.S. Senate passed the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act early last month in a 69-30 vote that included 19 Republican senators. Portman, who played a lead role in crafting the legislation, has been championing the bill since.

GAMING/GAMBLING

Ohio's gambling entities continued to post strong revenues in August, with casinos, racinos and the Ohio Lottery reporting year-over-year increases in August 2021. The state's four casinos made \$82.5 million in August 2021, higher than August 2020's total of \$77.4 million, according to the Ohio Casino Control Commission (OCCC). Ohio's seven racinos raked in \$111.9 million from video lottery terminals (VLTs) in August 2021, up from \$94.8 million in August 2020, according to the Ohio Lottery Commission (OLC). Total traditional tickets sales for the Ohio Lottery were \$349.1 million, compared to \$330.7 million in August 2020.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee reported out both SR175 (Romanchuk) and SR176 (Schaffer) during their first hearings on Tuesday. SR175 urges the PJM Interconnection and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to preserve the Minimum Offer Price Rule (MOPR) for the 13-state grid covered by PJM. SR176 urges Congress to avoid implementing "disproportionate" tax increases for the oil and natural gas industry. Committee Chair Sen. Rob McColley (R-Napoleon) said it was important to move these resolutions as soon as possible because federal action on these issues is expected in the coming days for SR175, and in the coming weeks for SR176. The resolutions went on to be adopted by the full Senate along party lines on Wednesday.

The upper chamber has once again passed a version of Sen. Theresa Gavarone's (R-Bowling Green) "Relapse Reduction Act," but this time the legislation was supported by Senate Democrats because of significant changes made to SB25 (Gavarone) in committee. The bill passed 29-1 on Wednesday, with Sen. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg) casting the lone "no" vote. Previous versions of the bill, 133-SB55 (Gavarone) and 132-HB296 (Gavarone), both failed to pass both chambers. The House will now consider SB25.

In other action, the Senate Ways and Means Committee reported out SB47 (Brenner-Peterson) which addresses overtime pay.

GREAT LAKES

The statewide Harmful Algal Bloom Research Initiative (HABRI) is improving information-sharing and priority-setting among Ohio universities and state agencies, helping to better prevent and manage future water quality crises, according to Ohio Sea Grant. Ohio Sea Grant -- on behalf of Ohio State University, the University of Toledo and the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) -- on Monday released the 2021 HABRI research findings report.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded a total of \$1,864,297 in grants to four Ohio educational institutions and organizations as part of the Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) program. The EOC program aims to increase the number of adults who pursue postsecondary education by providing counseling, support services, information on college admissions and postsecondary education options as well as student financial assistance. The four awards announced in Ohio are the following:

- \$750,750 to Educational Partners Inc. in Dayton
- \$272,634 to Eastern Gateway Community College in Youngstown
- \$446,708 to Shawnee State University in Portsmouth
- \$394,205 to Cuyahoga Community College District in Cleveland

Ohio State University (OSU) has introduced a new autonomous food delivery service that allows students, faculty and staff to order and receive food from campus cafes and restaurants. The program, which went live last month, uses more than 50 picnic-cooler-sized rovers that roll across campus to deliver food and drinks to the community.

Central State University (CSU) is one of five historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) selected to participate in a new scholarship program from Tiffany & Co. in collaboration with Beyonce and Jay-Z. Last month the jewelry company launched the "About Love" campaign starring the two performers, and now Tiffany & Co., in collaboration with BeyGOOD and the Shawn Carter Foundation, has announced the "About Love Scholarship" which pledges \$2 million for students in arts and creative fields at HBCUs.

The University of Toledo (UT) announced it will honor Cindy McCain, widow of former U.S. Sen. John McCain, at its 18th Annual International Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference for her work in the fight against human trafficking. McCain is a member of the Human Trafficking Council at the McCain Institute for International Leadership at Arizona State University and serves as chairwoman of the Hensley Beverage Company.

IMMIGRATION

Gov. Mike DeWine announced on Thursday the state has been notified by the federal government that it is receiving 855 Afghan evacuees through the U.S. Department of State's Afghan Placement and Assistance (APA) Program. The first group of Afghan evacuees totals 37,000 individuals nationwide. The federal government has told Ohio that the placements will be to eight local resettlement agencies located mainly in Northeast and Central Ohio, the governor's office said.

INSURANCE

In connection with the 2022 Medicare open enrollment period, the Ohio Department of Insurance (ODI) is conducting virtual and in-person events through its Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program (OSHIIP). Monday webinars will be held from Sept. 20 to Nov. 30, offering information on Medicare basics, coverage options and financial assistance programs. The on-site events are set for some counties but are subject to change, with more information available at www.insurance.ohio.gov. The Medicare enrollment period runs from Friday, Oct. 15 to Tuesday, Dec. 7; 2022 plan information will be released Friday, Oct. 1 at www.medicare.gov.

MARIJUANA/HEMP

As the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program (MMCP) continues to add patients and the Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) prepares to more than double the number of dispensaries in the state, the Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) announced Wednesday that it will allow cultivators to significantly expand their growing operations. The expansion would allow level one facilities to increase their cultivation areas from 25,000 square feet to 50,000 square feet and would enable level two facilities to increase their growing areas from 3,000 square feet to 6,000 square feet, according to DOC and agency spokesperson Jennifer Jarrell.

MENTAL HEALTH

The DeWine administration is considering using American Rescue Plan (ARP) dollars to help expand the state's mental health crisis response system, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) Director Lori Criss said during the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission (OCSC) meeting Thursday. Criss said one of her department's most important new goals is to expand the crisis response system so there is less reliance on jails and emergency departments for mental health or addiction crises.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) has filed a lawsuit intended to prevent the federal government's implementation of the "Sunny Oaks" clear-cut logging project in Wayne National Forest. The case, *Ohio Environmental Council v. U.S. Forest Service*, is being considered in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio Eastern Division.

NEWS MEDIA

Alan Miller will retire at the end of the year as executive editor of the *Columbus Dispatch* after a 37-year career at the paper that saw

him in several reporting and editing roles, the *Dispatch* reported. Miller also serves as Ohio regional editor for the 21 USA Today Network papers in Ohio.

OHIO HISTORY

Gov. Mike DeWine Friday ordered all U.S. and Ohio flags be flown at half-staff upon all public buildings and grounds throughout the state on Patriot Day to honor those killed in the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. Meanwhile, a number of officials issued statements in remembrance of the 9/11 attacks including U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown and U.S. Rep. Joyce Beatty.

PEOPLE

The Ohio Academy of Family Physicians (OAFP) recently swore in Dr. Teresa W. Zryd as its 2021-22 president during its virtual Annual Membership Meeting. Also honored at this year's annual meeting were the following: Dr. Gary LeRoy of Dayton received the OAFP Torchlight Leadership Award; Mike J. Appleman received the OAFP 2021 Friend of Family Medicine Award; Dr. Andrea Rosado of Cincinnati received the Resident Leadership Award; Dr. William D. Smucker was honored posthumously with the OAFP Family Medicine Educator of the Year Award; Dr. Richard Mizer received the OAFP 2021 Family Physician of the Year Award; and Dr. Jeffrey Bachtel of Tallmadge received the 2021 Philanthropist of the Year Award from the OAFP Foundation.

The Cincinnati Field Office of the FBI, which is involved in the investigation of former Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford), has a new special agent in charge. The FBI said Monday that Director Christopher Wray has named J. William Rivers to run the office. He most recently was a section chief and director of the Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center in Huntsville, AL.

POLITICS

The Ohio Republican Party (ORP) State Central Committee (SCC) on Friday unanimously voted to endorse Justices Pat DeWine and Pat Fischer for re-election to the Ohio Supreme Court, and Justice Sharon Kennedy for chief justice.

The SCC meeting, however, disintegrated to rowdy behavior as party Chair Bob Paduchik was interrupted a number of times by meeting attendees, several of whom wore shirts and held signs that said, "malcontent." Paduchik threatened to remove audience members several times, but ultimately did not publicly ask security to escort anybody out of the facility.

POLLS/STUDIES

A new poll from Quinnipiac University released this week shows President Joe Biden's job approval rating in negative territory for the first time since he took office. The survey found 42 percent of respondents approving of Biden's job performance and 50 percent disapproving. Quinnipiac Poll's last survey in August had Biden at 46 approval and 43 percent disapproval. Biden received approval of 88 percent of Democrats, but Republicans disapprove 91 percent to 7 percent and independent voters disapprove 52 percent to 34 percent. His numbers on handling the pandemic have fallen below 50 percent as the Delta variant of COVID-19 continues to have an impact, with 48 percent approving of Biden's handling of the pandemic compared to 49 percent disapproving. In August, 53 percent approved of his handling of the coronavirus.

POVERTY

Using its "Ohio Poverty Measure (OHPM)," public policy group Scioto Analysis found 9.68 percent of state residents are living in poverty, including 3.66 percent in "deep poverty." That group has a median income of \$4,918, the group continued in a report. Nearly one in four Black Ohioans live in poverty, Scioto Analysis continued, while the ratio for White Ohioans is one in 12. The poverty rate for children is 13.3 percent, and the highest rates are focused in cities and Southeast Ohio.

REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT

On a straight party line vote, the Ohio Redistricting Commission very early Thursday approved new House and Senate maps. Because no Democrats voted in favor of the maps, they will only last four years, though the issue will likely end up before the Ohio Supreme Court sometime in the coming weeks. The commission adopted changes Wednesday evening to the working maps that it had adopted last week over the objections of the two Democrats on the panel -- Sen. Vern Sykes (D-Akron) and House Minority Leader Rep. Emilia Sykes (D-Akron). The changes had been originally presented as a potential compromise to Democrats Tuesday evening in closed door deliberations, but both said the proposal was a "nonstarter," with Sen. Sykes arguing it was worse than the current maps and the commission's working maps. Over the course of Wednesday, the statewide officials on the panel -- Gov. Mike DeWine, Secretary of State Frank LaRose, and Auditor Keith Faber -- tried to bring the leaders of the legislative caucuses together for a compromise. However, as he later voted in favor of the new maps, DeWine said that he believed that no matter how much extra time they took, no deal would be made.

Hours after Republicans on the Ohio Redistricting Commission passed new House and Senate maps along party lines, assuring those maps would only last four years, Senate President and member of the commission Matt Huffman (R-Lima) defended the transparency in the process and said he acted in good faith in trying to come up with a bipartisan compromise. Meanwhile, outside groups issued statements criticizing the passage of the new maps and saying they are weighing their options for a possible lawsuit. Huffman, who introduced the maps that were ultimately adopted, told reporters Thursday that those maps were the only ones that were constitutional under the amendment adopted by voters in 2015. He said under the constitution, a number of items must be achieved, including items that he said make map drawing harder.

Saying their contest showed that competitive districts could be drawn for the Ohio General Assembly, the Fair Districts Ohio coalition

had earlier announced two winners of its redistricting contest while criticizing proposed new Ohio House and Senate maps introduced and accepted the day before by the Ohio Redistricting Commission. The coalition, which include the League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWV) and Common Cause Ohio, said they chose first place winners Geoff Wise of Cincinnati and Pranav Padmanbhan of Columbus from 30 entries that were submitted. Entries were evaluated on how well they followed the competition rules and complied with the mapping criteria in the Ohio Constitution. The maps were scored using Dave's Redistricting, a popular website used to draw new legislative maps.

Ohio Redistricting Commission Co-Chair Sen. Vern Sykes (D-Akron) and House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) had earlier on Monday introduced a new redistricting proposal for Ohio House and Senate districts based on the working map adopted by the commission the previous week, saying their maps were developed in the spirit of compromise and in the spirit of transparency.

Meanwhile, more than 100 witnesses spent hours over two days testifying before the Ohio Redistricting Commission on Sunday and Monday. Sunday's Dayton-area hearing, which lasted nearly five hours, was the first of three hearings and was attended by all of the regular commission members -- House Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima), Sen. Sykes, Rep. Sykes, Gov. Mike DeWine, Auditor Keith Faber, and Secretary of State Frank LaRose, with Sen. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg) filling in for Huffman. Monday's Cleveland hearing saw all of the regular commission members including Huffman attend. Tuesday's hearing in Columbus wrapped up testimony on proposed maps drawn by legislative Republicans with more than 90 witnesses submitting remarks to the panel.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Ohio Department of Development (DOD) and TourismOhio announced Monday the launch of a new Ohio.org webpage promoting Ohio-made products, as part of Small Business Week. The site, at <https://ohio.org/wps/portal/gov/tourism/home/made-in-ohio>, includes nearly 800 companies in three main categories of food and drink; apparel and accessories; and home and recreation, as well as 18 subcategories. Listings go directly to business websites to allow direct purchases. The page also offers ideas for travel around Ohio.

The Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) announced Monday that the state's Office of Fleet Management had been named among the "Top 50 Green Fleets" in the public and private sectors by the National Association of Fleet Administrators.

TECHNOLOGY/AEROSPACE

Describing it as an important achievement in both development of smart mobility technology and overall driver safety, state and local officials and business leaders opened the 33 Smart Mobility Corridor with a ribbon cutting at the Transportation Research Center (TRC) Wednesday. The corridor runs from the eastern part of Dublin to the TRC gates and passes through Marysville. Lt. Gov. Jon Husted said this section of U.S. Route 33 now represents the "longest connected corridor" in the country at 35 miles. It includes "432 strands of available fiber, 63 roadside units and 45 connected intersections" and incorporates "diverse geographical and meteorological scenarios."

The InnovateOhio Executive Committee's meeting Wednesday focused on efforts at the Transportation Research Center (TRC) in East Liberty. Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, who serves as director of InnovateOhio, noted the role of TRC as the largest independent vehicle test facility and proving grounds in the country. He highlighted the role of former Gov. Jim Rhodes in creating the TRC as an example of how actions today can provide benefits for decades to come as well. Husted also talked about the economic development opportunities the center generates.

Members of the Ohio Aerospace and Aviation Technology Committee (OAATC) discussed draft legislation Tuesday updating state law to reflect changes in Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulation on tall structures and airspace issues, including how advanced air mobility (AAM) may be involved in the future. Stacey Heaton, executive director of the Ohio Aviation Association, offered a detailed explanation of the issue, including how the FAA change took effect around the end of 2011. She said it was important for Ohio law to have a "parallel review process" and discussed the needs of aircraft as they land. The FAA does not take economic impact into consideration, Heaton continued, and it is important for the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to take local considerations into account in its process while also being able to apply the same criteria as the FAA.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Matt Damschroder Wednesday shared the department's progress and timeline to reduce the backlog of appeals caused by the historic number of unemployment claims filed during the course of the pandemic. Damschroder noted that the department is tracking progress and conducting bi-weekly forecasting to help manage efforts to reduce the number of pending appeals. Based on current volume of appeals, rate of processing, projected staffing and overtime levels, and other factors, the department is currently forecasting that most redeterminations will be issued by early December.

For the week ending Sept. 11, ODJFS reported 8,834 initial traditional unemployment claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). That number is lower than last week, when the department reported 13,509 traditional jobless claims.

Former Attorney General Marc Dann, now a consumer protection attorney with DannLaw and Advocate Attorneys LLP, on Thursday again asked Gov. Mike DeWine to reconsider his decision to end the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program early. Dann and his team are currently suing the state over the administration's decision to stop the \$300 federal unemployment payments months ahead of their expiration.

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