

OHIO PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Bill Information

HB3 AISHA'S LAW - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE *(BOYD J, CARRUTHERS S)*

To add domestic violence circumstances to the offenses of aggravated murder and endangering children, to establish local domestic violence high risk teams, and to require law enforcement officers to utilize a qualified lethality assessment screening tool to refer high risk victims to a local team.

CURRENT STATUS

12/2/2020 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, Senate Judiciary, (Second Hearing)

HB27 PUBLIC MOTOR VEHICLE LIABILITY *(INGRAM C)*

To modify political subdivision liability for an employee's negligent operation of a motor vehicle.

CURRENT STATUS

3/19/2019 - House Civil Justice, (Third Hearing)

HB48 LOCAL GOVT ROAD IMPROVEMENT FUND *(GREENSPAN D)*

To provide for a new Local Government Road Improvement Fund for local governments to fund road improvements.

CURRENT STATUS

2/12/2019 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HB51 UNDIVIDED HIGHWAY RUMBLE STRIPS *(GINTER T)*

To require the Ohio Department of Transportation to install rumble strips along the center line for all two-way, undivided state highways with a speed limit exceeding 45 miles per hour, as a part of specified highway projects.

CURRENT STATUS

12/11/2019 - Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce, (Second Hearing)

HB54 LGF TAX REVENUE INCREASE *(CERA J, ROGERS J)*

To increase the proportion of state tax revenue allocated to the Local Government Fund from 1.66% to 3.53% beginning July 1, 2019.

CURRENT STATUS

2/12/2019 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means



HB78 PREVAILING WAGE-PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS *(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

12/11/2019 - House Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)



HB92 VOTE ON COUNTY SALES TAX *(ANTANI N, SMITH J)*

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

CURRENT STATUS

3/13/2019 - House State and Local Government, (First Hearing)



HB93 PUBLIC TRANSIT INVESTMENT *(SKINDELL M, UPCHURCH T)*

To make appropriations related to public transportation.

CURRENT STATUS

3/5/2019 - Referred to Committee House Finance



HB116 TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH *(BRINKMAN T)*

To make an appropriation related to transportation planning and research.

CURRENT STATUS

12/1/2020 - House Finance, (First Hearing)



HB148 YIELD TO PARALLEL PARKERS *(BRINKMAN T)*

To require drivers to yield the right of way to any other vehicle that is parking in or exiting an angled or parallel parking space on a public road.

CURRENT STATUS

4/2/2019 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (First Hearing)

HB187 TAX ISSUES-AUGUST *(MERRIN D, WIGGAM S)*

To prohibit local tax-related proposals from appearing on an August special election ballot.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

4/10/2019 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government

HB202 ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE *(SMITH K, WEINSTEIN C)*

To establish the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Study Committee.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

12/1/2020 - **REPORTED OUT AS AMENDED**, House Transportation and Public Safety, (Sixth Hearing)

HB295 ELECTRIC SCOOTERS *(HOOPS J)*

To establish requirements governing low-speed electric scooters.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

2/12/2020 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED & REPORTED OUT**, Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce, (Sixth Hearing)

HB309 ASSAULT-TRANSIT OPERATOR *(DENSON S, PERALES R)*

To increase the penalty for assault when the victim is an operator of an Ohio transit system bus or rail car; to authorize Ohio transit systems to post a sign regarding abuse or assault of staff; and to increase the penalty for evading payment of the known fares of a public transportation system.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

2/20/2020 - House Criminal Justice, (First Hearing)

HB369 SEXUAL, GENDER DISCRIMINATION *(HILLYER B, SKINDELL M)*

To enact the Ohio Fairness Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, to add mediation as an informal method that the Ohio Civil Rights Commission may use, and to uphold existing religious exemptions under Ohio's Civil Rights Law.

📌 CURRENT STATUS

11/19/2020 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, House Civil Justice, (Third Hearing)

HB382 PROHIBIT INCOME TAX-MUNICIPAL NONRESIDENTS *(JORDAN K)*

To prohibit municipal corporations from levying an income tax on nonresidents' compensation for personal services or on net profits from a sole proprietorship owned by a nonresident.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

11/6/2019 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means

HB384 PERMITTING STOP SIGN REQUESTS *(BOGGS K, LELAND D)*

To permit a local resident, neighborhood association, or neighborhood organization to request the erection of a stop sign at an intersection and to support a request for a lower prima-facie speed limit on certain streets and highways.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

6/2/2020 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (Second Hearing)

HB468 HANDHELD ELECTRONIC DEVICE WHILE DRIVING *(LIGHTBODY M)*

To alter the law governing the use of a handheld electronic wireless communications device while driving.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

5/19/2020 - **BILL AMENDED**, House Transportation and Public Safety, (Second Hearing)

HB499 MOTOR FUEL TESTING PROGRAM *(KELLY B, LANG G)*

To authorize a county to implement a motor fuel quality testing program.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

5/19/2020 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (First Hearing)

HB501 ANIMAL-DRAWN VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS *(WIGGAM S, KICK D)*

To clarify the law governing slow-moving vehicles and to revise the lighting and reflective material requirements applicable to animal-drawn vehicles.

🚩 CURRENT STATUS

12/8/2020 - **PASSED BY HOUSE**; Vote 74-11

HB510 CRIMINAL PENALTIES - VEHICLE SAFETY *(PATTON T)*

To increase the criminal penalties associated with failing to secure a load on a vehicle.

CURRENT STATUS

3/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Criminal Justice

HB546 REGISTRATION FEES - ELECTRIC VEHICLES (MILLER J, WEINSTEIN C)

To alter the definitions of "plug-in electric motor vehicle" and "hybrid motor vehicle" under the motor vehicle law and to halve the additional registration fees for those two types of motor vehicles.

CURRENT STATUS

11/17/2020 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (Second Hearing)

HB550 MOTORCYCLE SAFETY EDUCATION (HOOPS J)

To make changes to the laws related to the motorcycle safety and education program.

CURRENT STATUS

11/10/2020 - **REPORTED OUT**, House Transportation and Public Safety, (Third Hearing)

HB566 INCREASE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND DISTRIBUTION (ROGERS J, CROSSMAN J)

To increase the percentage of revenue to the General Revenue Fund distributed to the Local Government Fund and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

5/5/2020 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HB570 OPEN BIDDING DURING COVID-19 (BOGGS K)

To allow a county to purchase public health-related items and communication equipment without competitive bidding, solicit bids electronically, and open bids during a meeting held electronically during the period of the emergency declared by Executive Order 2020-01D, issued on March 9, 2020, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

5/5/2020 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government

HB581 ADDRESS COVID-19 CONCERNS (CALLENDER J)

To address immediate concerns related to COVID-19.

CURRENT STATUS

5/5/2020 - Referred to Committee House Health

HB582 MAKE APPROPRIATIONS, REAPPROPRIATIONS *(CALLENDER J)*

To make appropriations for the biennium ending June 30, 2021, and capital reappropriations for the biennium ending June 30, 2022.

CURRENT STATUS

5/5/2020 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HB593 REQUIRED PAID LEAVE - COVID-19 *(BOYD J, BOGGS K)*

To require paid leave for an employee who is unable to work due to quarantine or mandatory isolation, to create a grant program to compensate contract workers who cannot perform services during public health emergencies, to make an appropriation, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

12/1/2020 - House Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)

HB600 AMBULANCE LICENSE EXPANSION *(BLAIR G, O'BRIEN M)*

To authorize a person who has had a valid commercial driver's license to drive an ambulance during the state of emergency due to COVID-19 and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

5/5/2020 - Referred to Committee House Transportation and Public Safety

HB601 MATHEW'S LAW *(PERALES R)*

To enact Matthew's Law, requiring public buildings to have at least one rest room facility with an adult changing station and authorizing an income tax credit for installation.

CURRENT STATUS

6/9/2020 - House State and Local Government, (First Hearing)

HB606 CIVIL IMMUNITY - COVID-19 TRANSMISSION *(GRENDALL D)*

To grant civil immunity to a person who provides services for essential businesses and operations for injury, death, or loss that was caused by the transmission of COVID-19 during the period of emergency declared by Executive Order 2020-01D, issued on March 9, 2020.

CURRENT STATUS

9/14/2020 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**

HB609 TEMPORARY TAX AMNESTY PROGRAM *(WEST T)*

To require the Tax Commissioner to administer a temporary amnesty program from August 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, with respect to delinquent state taxes and fees, and to repeal Section 1 of this act on January 1, 2021.

■ CURRENT STATUS

12/17/2020 - **REPORTED OUT AS AMENDED**, Senate Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)

HB615 PROTECTIVE BARRIERS - SCHOOL BUSES *(SOBECKI L, MILLER J)*

To authorize the installation of protective barriers in school buses, to require the Director of Public Safety to adopt rules related to the barriers, and to declare an emergency.

■ CURRENT STATUS

5/26/2020 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (First Hearing)

HB671 PUBLIC HEALTH ORDER LIMITS *(ABRAMS C, STEPHENS J)*

To establish limits on certain public health orders issued by boards of health and the Department of Health, to prohibit a licensing authority from taking disciplinary action against a licensee for engaging in permitted activities during a pandemic, and to declare an emergency.

■ CURRENT STATUS

6/9/2020 - House State and Local Government, (Fourth Hearing)

HCR17 EXPAND SNAP TO STRIKERS *(SOBECKI L, RUSSO A)*

Urging Congress to expand Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligibility to include the households of striking workers.

■ CURRENT STATUS

2/11/2020 - House Health, (First Hearing)

HCR21 OHIO LOVES TRANSIT DAY *(LEPORE-HAGAN M, GREENSPAN D)*

To declare February 14, 2020, as "Ohio Loves Transit Day" and encourage all Ohioans to participate in the events taking place across Ohio during the week of and on February 14, 2020, to celebrate the importance of public transit in Ohio.

■ CURRENT STATUS

1/28/2020 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (First Hearing)

HCR31 DECLARE RACISM PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS *(HOWSE S, CRAWLEY E)*

To declare racism a public health crisis and to ask the Governor to establish a working group to promote racial equity in Ohio.

CURRENT STATUS

6/3/2020 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government

SB132 GAS TAX-LOCAL GOVERNMENT ALLOCATION *(WILLIAMS S)*

To modify the amount of revenue derived from any increase in the motor fuel tax rate that is allocated to local governments and to change the manner in which that revenue is divided between municipal corporations, counties, and townships.

CURRENT STATUS

5/1/2019 - Referred to Committee Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce

SB134 PASSING SCHOOL BUSES *(GAVARONE T)*

To make changes to the law governing passing a school bus, to create a new offense for vehicular homicide and vehicular assault related to improperly passing a stopped school bus, to make an appropriation, and to designate this the School Bus Safety Act.

CURRENT STATUS

5/19/2020 - House Criminal Justice, (First Hearing)

SB285 DISTRACTED DRIVING *(O'BRIEN S, KUNZE S)*

To revise the laws relative to distracted driving and the use of an electronic wireless communications device while driving.

CURRENT STATUS

9/22/2020 - Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs, (Third Hearing)

SB291 ELECTRIC VEHICLE FEES *(LEHNER P, HOTTINGER J)*

To provide for the proration of the plug-in electric and hybrid motor vehicle registration fees.

CURRENT STATUS

5/6/2020 - Referred to Committee Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce

SB293 OPEN MEETINGS LAW COMPLAINTS *(MANNING N, BLESSING III L)*

To create a procedure within the Court of Claims to hear complaints alleging a violation of the Open Meetings Law.

CURRENT STATUS

11/10/2020 - House Civil Justice, (First Hearing)

SB299 REQUIRE PAID LEAVE (CRAIG H)

To require paid leave for an employee who is unable to work due to quarantine or mandatory isolation, to create a grant program to compensate contract workers who cannot perform services during public health emergencies, to make an appropriation, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

5/6/2020 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance

SB307 SALES TAX EXEMPTION-PPE (GAVARONE T)

To authorize a temporary sales and use tax exemption for personal protective equipment and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

6/9/2020 - Senate Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)

SB308 CIVIL LIABILITY-EMERGENCY SERVICES (HUFFMAN M)

To revise the law governing immunity from civil liability and professional discipline for health care providers during disasters or emergencies, to provide qualified civil immunity to service providers providing services during and after a government-declared disaster, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

6/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Civil Justice

SB310 CAPITAL APPROPRIATIONS (DOLAN M)

To provide for the distribution of some federal coronavirus relief funding to local subdivisions and businesses, to revise the formula used to determine Medicaid rates for nursing facility services, to exclude loan amounts forgiven under the federal CARES Act from the commercial activity tax, to apply the Prevailing Wage Law to transportation improvement district projects under certain circumstances, to allow certain state employees' salaries and pay supplements to be frozen during the pay period that includes July 1, 2020, through the pay period that includes June 30, 2021, to temporarily expand the use of certain tax increment financing payments, to exempt certain political subdivision purchases from competitive bidding requirements during the COVID-19 emergency, to suspend certain county hospital bidding requirements during the COVID-19 emergency, to allow a county, township, or municipal corporation appointing authority to establish a mandatory cost savings program in response to COVID-19, to make capital reappropriations for the biennium ending June 30, 2022, to make other appropriations, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

12/18/2020 - Consideration of Conference Committee Report; Vote 29-0, Emergency Clause 29-0

SB322 NON-RECOURSE CIVIL LITIGATION ADVANCES (WILSON S)

To amend the law regarding the non-recourse civil litigation advance business.

CURRENT STATUS

6/10/2020 - Referred to Committee Senate Judiciary

SB348 LOCAL BOARDS OF HEALTH (SCHAFFER T, ROEGNER K)

To prohibit local boards of health from using certain threatening words in notifications to the public, to allow local boards of health to reject Department of Health orders during an emergency, to allow health care professionals who serve on a board of health to receive continuing education credit, and to change the makeup of local boards of health.

CURRENT STATUS

9/1/2020 - Referred to Committee Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid

SB350 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION VOUCHERS FOR STUDENTS (BRENNER A)

To prohibit school districts from providing vouchers for public transportation to students enrolled in grades kindergarten through eight for the 2020-2021 school year.

CURRENT STATUS

11/17/2020 - Senate Education, (Fourth Hearing)

SJR3 REQUIRE SUPERMAJORITY-INCOME TAX INCREASE (BURKE D)

Proposing to enact Section 7 of Article XII of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to require that any increase in income tax rates be approved by a supermajority of the membership of each house of the General Assembly.

CURRENT STATUS

6/9/2020 - **REPORTED OUT**, Senate Ways and Means, (Sixth Hearing)

Week in Review

Friday, Dec. 18, 2020

ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The ACLU of Ohio filed an amicus brief Monday with the Supreme Court of Ohio in *State v. Foreman*, a case addressing whether a defendant can be convicted of felony cocaine possession based solely on the presence of metabolites in the body. After Kelly Foreman gave birth in a Seneca County hospital in March 2018, a toxicology screen revealed cocaine or cocaine metabolites in the umbilical cord as well as in the newborn's urine and stool. She was arrested, charged with felony possession of cocaine, and convicted.

Addressing reporters during his Thursday briefing, Gov. Mike DeWine said that an increase in overdose deaths has been a "troubling" aspect of the pandemic, with the associated uncertainty intensifying the struggle those with substance use disorder face. However, he

also announced grants totaling \$76.5 million to support new strategic efforts combating Ohio's drug crisis in local communities. The grants are part of an overall state share of \$96 million in federal State Opioid Response (SOR) 2.0 funding.

The Ohio Department of Public Safety's (ODPS) Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) announced \$427,143 in federal grants Thursday to help state and local governments develop substance abuse programs in correctional and detention facilities and community-based aftercare services for offenders.

AGRICULTURE

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg) plans to allow farmers in 10 more counties to participate in its H2Ohio best management practices (BMP) program, ODAg Director Dorothy Pelanda announced Monday. ODAg spokesperson Shelby Croft told *Hannah News* that the following counties will be added: Ottawa, Sandusky, Seneca, Wyandot, Crawford, Marion, Shelby, Erie, Huron and Richland

Legislation that would eliminate the Ohio Department of Health's (ODH) coronavirus-related order on county fair activities was reported out of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee on Wednesday after lawmakers added an amendment creating the "Agricultural Society Working Group for 2021." The bill, SB375 (Hoagland), backed by county fairs and related industries, recently moved out of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee after one hearing and was passed by the Senate the next day. The DeWine administration had initially allowed for full fairs, but ultimately limited county and independent fairs to junior fair activities and spectator-free harness racing after a number of COVID-19 cases were traced back to fairs, some of which were apparently not complying with ODH's public health order.

ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

After decades of protests from Native American advocacy organizations, the Major League Baseball (MLB) team in Cleveland will soon cease being known as the "Indians." On Monday, the Cleveland Indians officially announced its decision to begin the process of changing its name, noting team leaders conducted an "extensive" review process starting in July. The NFL's Washington Football Team dropped the name "Redskins" that month, increasing pressure on the Indians to make a similar move. The Indians recently dropped its "Chief Wahoo" logo, which was widely recognized as a racist caricature of a Native American.

The U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to consider whether the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) can restrict what kind of compensation its athletes can receive. The NCAA appealed the decision of the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in *NCAA v. Alston*, which found that the NCAA's eligibility rules regarding athlete compensation violate federal antitrust law.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost has joined the "Do the Write Thing" Challenge to encourage young people -- in their own words -- to discuss instances of violence they have experienced and to share their ideas about how to reduce violence in their community. The challenge is organized by the U.S. National Campaign to Stop Youth Violence and has been in existence for 25 years, operating programs in 26 cities in 13 states.

FY21-22 CAPITAL APPROPRIATIONS

The Conference Committee on SB310 (Dolan) finished its work, started early in the week, on Thursday in a two-part meeting that saw the conference committee further expand the scope of the bill beyond capital appropriations, moving it to "Christmas tree" status. Already on Wednesday, provisions had been added addressing a variety of pandemic related issues ranging from the spending of CARES Act dollars to scope of practice questions during the pandemic to further afield addressing a delay in the EdChoice application period and the establishing of a kinship care program. On Thursday, the committee met in the morning where it quickly added eight more amendments, returning after 9 p.m. that night to add another five amendments before approving the conference report on a unanimous 6-0 vote. SB310 had an unusual road through the Legislature, making a 100 percent switch from its original purpose as a vehicle to provide for the distribution of federal coronavirus relief funds to local governments to having those provisions removed entirely and the FY21-22 capital appropriations package wholesale substituted into the bill.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

Infant deaths in Ohio dropped slightly in 2019 for a third consecutive year, according to a report released by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Thursday, but the data also found Black infants were 2.8 times more likely to die than White ones. Discussing the report in his Thursday press conference, Gov. Mike DeWine said that finding is "extremely troubling" and "unacceptable." While he noted that efforts had been implemented near the end of 2019 and thus were not represented in the data, DeWine said that more needs to be done to address the racial gap. The latest data showed 929 infant deaths, down from 938 the year before, but the number of Black infant deaths increased by 17 to 356. The number of White infants that died in 2019 was 518, the lowest number in the past 10 years.

CORONAVIRUS

The unethical Tuskegee study, the Trump administration's absence of credibility and poor communication, lack of diversity in clinical studies and the current shoddy level of health care experienced by many Black and Latinx Ohioans are all factors causing minorities to hesitate before agreeing to take a COVID-19 vaccine, Ohio Commission on Minority Health (OCMH) Director Angela Dawson said Friday during the Ohio Legislative Black Caucus (OLBC) Foundation's "Perspective 2020."

Calling it "the day we have been waiting for," Gov. Mike DeWine announced Monday that the start of vaccinations for health care workers is a major step toward ending the pandemic, while also cautioning that there is a considerable way to go before herd

immunity is achieved. Ohioans should not let their guard down in the coming weeks and months, he said, and those who have been vaccinated should continue wearing a mask and taking other steps to protect those around them. Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Chief Medical Officer Bruce Vanderhoff said the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officials are still studying how well the vaccine prevents people from transmitting the virus to others.

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor urged Gov. Mike DeWine to include court staff and litigants in a select group of individuals chosen for round one of the coronavirus vaccine. O'Connor labeled county and district courthouses some of the "busiest government offices and among the hardest to enforce social distancing," noting sketchy broadband also hampers remote proceedings in rural courts.

Ohio is scheduled to receive 420,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine from Pfizer and Moderna by Christmas, and another 137,000 doses the week of New Year's Day, Gov. Mike DeWine said Tuesday. Monday was the first day Ohio began receiving and administering doses of vaccine, and DeWine spent his Tuesday press conference speaking with medical professionals around the state about the efforts to roll out the doses that Ohio receives to medical professionals and those in congregate settings like nursing homes. They shared a similar message -- that the vaccine is the beginning of the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the end is still far away and that Ohioans should continue to take safety precautions to prevent the spread of the virus.

DeWine and Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Chief Medical Officer Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff stressed the safety of the coronavirus vaccine Thursday, as health care workers continue to undergo vaccination. It will be provided in nursing homes on Friday. Four pharmacy companies will conduct that effort using the Pfizer vaccine, DeWine said, as part of an expanded federal program. The four companies are also handling the scheduling for when vaccination is done, with all nursing homes at the same priority level. The state veterans homes will be included in that effort, and DeWine said he would be at the home in Sandusky to see vaccinations there firsthand Friday.

Reps. John Patterson (D-Jefferson) and John Rogers (D-Mentor-on-the-Lake) have both been hospitalized due to COVID-19, according to interviews the two gave to the *Ohio Capital Journal*. Both have also been diagnosed with pneumonia as a result. The article, published Tuesday, said that Rogers was admitted Sunday afternoon and has received supplemental oxygen, while Patterson was hospitalized Monday and has not needed oxygen.

ECONOMY

According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), if the October employment rebound after the initial COVID-19 disruptions continues throughout 2020 in a similar magnitude, total employment is predicted to increase at an annual rate of 0.27 percent for the next six months in Ohio.

For the week ending Dec. 12, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) reported 38,327 initial unemployment claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). That number is higher than last week's total of 36,327, which had been the highest number in several months as the state continues to grapple with the surge of coronavirus-related cases, hospitalizations, intensive care unit (ICU) admissions and deaths.

EDUCATION

The State Board of Education (SBOE) Assessment and Accountability Committee considered a study from the Fordham Institute at its Monday meeting showing higher academic and behavioral outcomes for low-income students in charter schools compared to their peers in traditional public schools. Speaking to the committee was the study's author Stephane Lavertu, a professor at the Ohio State University John Glenn College of Public Affairs, who said the students who experience the highest education gains from attending charter schools are low-income students, students in urban areas and Black students.

The State Board of Education (SBOE) spent most of its final meeting for the year revisiting the discussion of racism and the board's decision to adopt a resolution condemning racism as an impediment to educational equity over the summer. The board voted in adopt the resolution in the wake of nationwide protests over racism and police conduct sparked by the death of George Floyd, and it inspired lengthy debate and drew public criticism and praise at board meetings for months. The discussion Tuesday similarly lasted over two hours and began when Board President Laura Kohler presented members with a video, available at <https://tinyurl.com/yahc52y9>, which details the history of racial oppression in America. She asked State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria to moderate a discussion on the video among members, though she noted not all members may want to see the video, and some members did temporarily leave the virtual meeting.

Fourteen rural Ohio school districts and their corresponding counties and townships will share more than \$1.3 million in timber sales from state forests, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Forestry. "Investments in our schools and communities are investments in the future," Gov. Mike DeWine said. "The funding provided by the sound management of Ohio's forests through the 'Trees to Textbooks' program is particularly critical right now, as educators are finding new and different ways to support our students this year."

ELECTIONS

The Ohio Elections Commission found a violation in Rep. Nino Vitale's (R-Urbana) campaign finance report due to the report's being filed a day late, but did not impose any penalties or fines against him. The commission also set a hearing for other matters regarding Vitale that had been forwarded by Secretary of State Frank LaRose's office alleging that on at least three occasions, Friends to Elect Nino Vitale, paid for Facebook advertisements without reporting those expenditures in his annual report; that his campaign failed to keep separate contributions received by his campaign committee from a personal or business account of Vitale; and that he has

converted items from his campaign fund for personal use.

ELECTIONS 2020

Ohio's 18 Electoral College members met Monday in the Ohio Senate Chamber to officially cast the state's electoral votes for President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence. It was the first time since 1960 Ohio's delegation cast its votes for the candidates who ultimately did not prevail. President-elect Joe Biden received 306 electoral votes as delegations met in their respective states around the country, more than the 270 votes needed to be elected president.

The winners of the two Ohio Supreme Court races this year outspent their opponents in the days leading up to the Nov. 3 election, according to new campaign finance filings with the secretary of state's office. The reports showed Democrat Jennifer Brunner, who unseated Justice Judith French, raised nearly \$62,000 in the final days of the campaign, spent \$308,133, and has \$35,909 on hand. In the other Supreme Court race, which saw incumbent Sharon Kennedy defeat John O'Donnell, Kennedy reported receiving \$98,421 in contributions and spent \$329,196, and has \$78,634 on hand. O'Donnell raised \$49,876, spent \$162,070, and has \$37,053 on hand. He also lent his own committee \$15,000.

In other reports filed Friday, the Republican Senate Campaign Committee outspent all of the other legislative caucuses combined as it picked up another seat in the chamber and defended all of its incumbents. According to filings, the committee raised \$511,050, spent nearly \$1.8 million, and has \$195,129 on hand. The committee also made \$933,159 in in-kind contributions. On the other side of the aisle, the Senate Democratic Caucus raised \$54,862, spent \$285,236, and has \$115,741 on hand.

Franklin County Judge Richard Frye recently dismissed a lawsuit by the Ohio Democratic Party (ODP) against Secretary of State Frank LaRose over an order limiting the number of absentee ballot dropboxes each county can have. ODP filed the lawsuit in August, arguing that Ohio law did not prevent counties from having more than one location for voters to return absentee ballots. Frye sided with the plaintiffs, saying LaRose's directive limiting the number of boxes was arbitrary and unreasonable. LaRose appealed, and the 10th District Court of Appeals found fault with LaRose's interpretation of the Ohio Revised Code to limit the number of boxes, but also said that Frye had overstepped his authority in ordering LaRose to permit more drop boxes.

The U.S. Supreme Court late Friday rejected a lawsuit filed by the attorney general of Texas against four swing states over the presidential election, with the Court saying Texas lacked standing to file the lawsuit. In a one-page order issued by the Court, the justices said Texas "has not demonstrated a judicially cognizable interest in the manner in which another state conducts its elections. All other pending motions are dismissed as moot." Justice Samuel Alito wrote a dissent that Justice Clarence Thomas joined, saying that it is his view the Court does not have the discretion to deny the filing of a bill of complaint in a case that falls within the Court's jurisdiction.

ENERGY

The Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) filed an amicus brief in support of the lawsuit filed by Columbus and Cincinnati to halt the HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) rider, a cost scheduled to hit the pockets of millions of Ohioans in the new year. The two cities sued the state of Ohio in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas in October, naming former Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) Chair Sam Randazzo, Ohio Treasurer Robert Sprague and FirstEnergy in the lawsuit.

After accepting a multifaceted amendment to address some of the concerns expressed over the past week, the House Select Committee on Energy Policy and Oversight voted mostly along party lines to report out HB798 (Hoops), which would delay and modify some provisions in scandal-plagued energy subsidy law HB6 (Callender-Wilkin). Rep. Mark Romanchuk (R-Mansfield) joined Reps. David Leland (D-Columbus), Kristin Boggs (D-Columbus), Sedrick Denson (D-Cincinnati), Michael O'Brien (D-Warren), Allison Russo (D-Columbus) and Kent Smith (D-Euclid) in voting against the bill in the 8-7 vote.

ENVIRONMENT

Gov. Mike DeWine and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) Director Laurie Stevenson announced that nearly \$12 million in grants will be awarded to 40 entities, including 10 school districts, to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions from diesel vehicles and equipment.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has launched the Clearinghouse for Environmental Finance, an online database of land, air and water information. This new database catalogues available funding, financing and instructional resources to aid communities in their efforts to improve environmental conditions. The USEPA Office of Policy collaborated with the USEPA Office of Water to launch the new collection of data, according to a news release from the federal agency.

The Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (OAQDA) has closed on \$85,120 in bond financing to support Gault's Plaza Cleaners and Laundromat in Knox County, the agency announced Tuesday.

GAMING/GAMBLING

While the state's four casinos and seven racinos have enjoyed financial success in the months after reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic, gamblers spent less time and money at the facilities in November, according to data from the Ohio Casino Control Commission (OCCC) and Ohio Lottery Commission (OLC). Statewide revenues were down for a variety of reasons, including the DeWine administration's curfew and patrons' taking seriously their role in reducing the spread of the coronavirus, OCCC spokesperson Jessica Franks and OLC spokesperson Danielle Frizzi-Babb told *Hannah News*.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The Senate passed 16 bills during its Thursday session, before deciding to return on Friday, Dec. 18. The Senate also confirmed the appointment of Stephanie McCloud as director of the Ohio Department of Health over the objections of Democrats who believe she lacks the necessary medical/public health qualifications for the position. Bills that passed the Senate include the following:

- **SB10** (Wilson) conference committee report regarding theft in office penalties.
- **HB1** (Plummer) To modify the requirements for intervention in lieu of conviction and for sealing records of conviction.
- **HB33** (Lanese-Carruthers) To establish animal abuse reporting requirements.
- **HB46** (Greenspan) To require the treasurer of state to establish the Ohio State Government Expenditure Database.
- **HB67** (Brinkman-Kelly) To allow a licensed veterinarian to receive up to two continuing education credits per biennium for performing free spaying and neutering services.
- **HB231** (Greenspan) To require the Department of Education to notify public and private schools of free epinephrine autoinjector programs and to enact the "Allison Rose Suhy Act" with regard to food allergy training for public schools and institutions of higher education.
- **HB253** (Householder) To revise the Fireworks Law.
- **HB263** (Koehler) To revise the initial occupational licensing restrictions applicable to individuals convicted of criminal offenses.
- **HB308** (Patton) Concerning workers' compensation and disability retirement for peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical workers diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder arising from employment without an accompanying physical injury.
- **HB352** (Cross) To modify Ohio civil rights laws related to employment.
- **HB365** (Manning) To revise the requirements for a chemical dependency counselor II license.
- **HB409** (Koehler) Regarding student attendance at Internet- or computer-based community schools that are not dropout prevention and recovery schools.
- **HB431** (Abrams-Carfagna) To create the Sexual Exploitation Database and to make an appropriation.
- **HB436** (Baldrige) With regard to screening and intervention for children with dyslexia.
- **HB473** (J. Smith) To allow the state motto to be used alongside the state seal.
- **SB314** (Brenner) To prohibit state agencies from charging a fee to professional license holders in relation to a business relocation during the COVID-19 declared state of emergency and to declare an emergency.
- **SB380** (Hoagland) To authorize the use of owls in the sport of falconry.

Individuals in Ohio would be allowed to use deadly force against another person if they believe they are in immediate danger of death or serious bodily harm in nearly any location or situation under legislation approved by the House on Thursday. Passing the "stand your ground" gun bill was one of many actions taken by the House during the 12-hour-long session that lasted into the early hours of Friday morning. The chamber also acted on bills related to abortion, criminal justice reform, capital appropriations, water quality, critical infrastructure, health care and electronic bingo, among other issues. The chamber plans to hold another session sometime next week to finish up its work.

The House also didn't attempt to override Gov. Mike DeWine's veto of SB311 (McColley-Roegner), legislation that restricts the authority of the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) to act during a pandemic or bioterrorist attack. The House actually may not have had the necessary votes to take action on HB798 -- the HB6 delay bill -- or SB311, as 13 members were absent due to COVID-19 diagnoses or other reasons. Those not attending session included Reps. Richard Brown (D-Canal Winchester), Jon Cross (R-Kenton), Anthony DeVitis (R-Uniontown), Diane Grendell (R-Chesterland), Larry Householder (R-Glenford), Bernadine Kennedy Kent (D-Columbus), Michele Lepore-Hagan (D-Youngstown), John Patterson (D-Jefferson), Tom Patton (R-Strongsville), John Rogers (D-Mentor-on-the-Lake), Gary Scherer (R-Circleville), Nino Vitale (R-Urbana) and Casey Weinstein (D-Hudson).

Bills that passed the House include the following:

- **SB9** (M. Huffman) conference committee report on health plan claim information.
- **SB10** (Wilson) conference committee report regarding theft in office penalties.
- **SB310** (Dolan) conference committee report on the capital appropriations, et al bill.
- **SB33** (Hoagland) To modify certain criminal offenses with respect to critical infrastructure facilities and to impose fines and civil liability for damage to a critical infrastructure facility.
- **SB68** (Williams) To allow a court to authorize completion of a community service program in lieu of payment of driver's license reinstatement fees when the court determines that an offender cannot reasonably pay the fees and to establish a reinstatement fee waiver plan.

- **SB140** (Uecker) To exempt knives not used as weapons from the prohibition against carrying concealed weapons and to eliminate the prohibition against manufacturing, possessing for sale, selling, or furnishing certain weapons other than firearms or dangerous ordnance.
- **SB175** (Schaffer) To grant civil immunity to nonprofit corporations for certain injuries, deaths, or losses resulting from the carrying of handguns.
- **SB194** (Rulli) To rename the Board of Voting Machine Examiners as the Board of Voting Systems Examiners, to require the Board to approve voter registration systems for use in Ohio, to require a board of elections to decide a protest against a candidate filing by a particular deadline, to allow veteran's and fraternal organizations to conduct electronic instant bingo, and to make other changes to the law governing bingo.
- **SB236** (S. Huffman) To revise the laws governing the Ohio Department of Health's Radiation Control Program, the regulation of radiation technology professionals, and the practice of anesthesiologist assistants and to specify that a nonprofit formed or acquired by a county hospital is a separate entity from the hospital.
- **SB256** (Manning-Lehner) Regarding a bar against a sentence of life without parole, and special parole dates, for offenders who committed the offense when under age 18, and to amend the version of section 2907.02 of the Revised Code that takes effect on March 22, 2020, to continue the provisions of this act on and after that date.
- **SB258** (Gavarone) To enter into the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT) and to make changes to the massage therapy licensing law.
- **SB259** (Sykes) To authorize the conveyance of state-owned real property and to specify that tax increment financing minimum service payment obligation agreements are enforceable against subsequent property owners.
- **SB260** (S. Huffman) Regarding abortion-inducing drugs.
- **SB263** (Hackett) To prohibit a pharmacy benefit manager from taking certain actions with respect to reimbursements made to health care providers that participate in the federal 340B Drug Pricing Program.
- **SB276** (Roegner-Manning) To enact the Ohio Revised Limited Liability Company Act and to make changes to the Unclaimed Funds Law.
- **SB277** (Schuring) To revise the Ohio Pooled Collateral Program, the Unclaimed Funds Law, and the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund disability determination procedures.
- **SB312** (McColley) To reallocate jurisdictional responsibilities of current judges of the Hardin County Court of Common Pleas, to create the Domestic Relations Division of the Hardin County Court of Common Pleas, and to modify the provisions regarding the reimbursement of assigned municipal and county court judges.
- **SB331** (Roegner) To implement the recommendations of the Sunset Review Committee by terminating or renewing various agencies, and to require a Sunset Review Committee to be convened during each General Assembly.

Term-limited Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering) sees wearing a mask as an extension of her pro-life principles, which she said have provided her a moral compass for passing policy at the Statehouse. Given the consensus of medical experts who say that mask-wearing is better to prevent the spread of COVID-19 than not wearing a mask, Lehner said she sees masks as protecting life. "I just don't understand how you in one minute can be talking about pro-life issues where life is the most important value that we have, and in the next, refusing to do something simple like wearing a mask that can protect all of us. I really struggle with that," Lehner told *Hannah News* in an interview. "It struck me as really ironic how many people are saying, 'Keep your hands off my body: it's my choice as to whether or not to wear a mask,' and that those are the very same people who are advocating pro-life principles. So yeah, I have been -- baffled is way too mild of a word."

In other action, the House Finance Committee reported out HB302 (Perales) which adds child abuse to the violent offender database; House Health Committee reported out SB302 (Eklund-Antonio) which deals with stroke patient protocols; SB272 (Roegner-Blessing) which enters the state into the Physical Therapy Licensure Compact; and SB267 (S. Huffman) which designates August as "Bone Marrow Donation Awareness Month"; the House Select Committee on Energy Policy and Oversight reported out HB798 (Hoops) which delays for one year HB6 changes; House Aging and Long-Term Care Committee reported out HB770 (Richardson-Fraizer) which permits essential long-term caregivers to enter long-term care facilities; House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee reported out SB375 (Hoagland-Schaffer) which voids health orders regarding county fairs; the House Criminal Justice Committee reported out drug sentencing reform legislation SB3 (Eklund-O'Brien); SB256 (Manning-Lehner) which bars a life sentence for those offenders under 18; SB156 (Gavarone) which prohibits defrauding an alcohol, drug or urine screening test; and SB369 (Lehner-Manning) which revises the eligibility standards for crime victim reparations; the House State and Local Government Committee reported out SB360 (Obhof) which prohibits banning firearms sales; the House Ways and Means Committee reported out SB95 (Kunze-Peterson) which deals with state and local tax inducements for businesses making certain investments; SB212 (Schuring) which addresses property tax exemptions; and SB125 (Hottinger-Brenner) which expands the deduction allowed for contributions to Ohio's 529 plans; the Senate Education Committee reported out HB436 (Baldrige) which provides for dyslexia screenings; and HB111 (Ingram) which addresses the timely transfer of school records; the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee reported out HB673 (Roemer) which deals with business operations as they relate to COVID-19; the Senate Government Oversight

and Reform Committee reported out HB32 (Stein) addressing state flag retirement; HB71 (Scherer-Cera) regarding cigarette minimum pricing; and HB425 (Wiggam) which deals with concealed weapons; the Senate Judiciary Committee reported out HB464 (Cupp-Rogers) which deals with a guardian's authority; the Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee reported out HB29 (Koehler) which prohibits the sale of dextromethorphan without a prescription; HB75 (Merrin) dealing with local governments' challenges of property values; HB277 (Plummer-West) which deals with recording of custodial interrogations; HB421 (J. Smith-G. Blair) which addresses liability around actions of hospital police officers; HB429 (LaRe-Abrams) which changes the SOS Address Confidentiality Program; and HB444 (Baldrige-Abrams) which changes township law; the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee reported out HB442 (Roemer-West) which addresses requirements for obtaining a CPA certificate; and the Senate Ways and Means Committee reported out HB609 (West) which provides a temporary tax amnesty program.

Rep. Bernadine Kennedy Kent (D-Columbus), who has refused to attend hearings or sessions for much of the 133rd General Assembly, filed a federal lawsuit against the House Democratic Caucus, Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) and former Minority Leader Fred Strahorn (D-Dayton) Wednesday, arguing her removal from the caucus violated her rights. The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio and claims House Democratic leaders retaliated against her and violated her First Amendment rights when it voted to remove her from the caucus in June 2018.

GOVERNOR

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Robert A. Montagnese of Pataskala (Licking County) reappointed to the Central Ohio Technical College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Dec. 10, 2020 and ending Sept. 30, 2023.
- Scott Borgemenke of Dublin (Delaware County) to the Ohio University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2021 and ending May 13, 2027.
- Laura E. Kohler of New Albany (Franklin County), Stephen D. Dackin of Columbus (Franklin County), Martha Manchester of Lakeview (Auglaize County) and Eric A. Poklar of Worthington (Franklin County) reappointed to the State Board of Education for terms beginning Jan. 1, 2021 and ending Dec. 31, 2024.
- Celina Cunanan of Shaker Heights (Cuyahoga County), Terri M. Moncrief of Clayton (Montgomery County) and L. Tony Ortiz of Beavercreek (Greene County) to the Commission on Minority Health for terms beginning Dec. 11, 2020 and ending Sept. 2, 2022.
- Megan E. Durst of Dresden (Muskingum County) to the Accountancy Board for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2021 and ending Oct. 7, 2027.
- Benjamin W. Fields of Powell (Delaware County) reappointed to the State Board of Psychology for a term beginning Dec. 11, 2020 and ending Oct. 4, 2025.
- Jennifer L. Wissinger of Pataskala (Licking County) and Craig R. Campbell of Leesburg (Highland County) to the Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Athletic Trainers Board for terms beginning Jan. 1, 2021 and ending Aug. 27, 2023.
- Melissa Van Allen of Columbus (Franklin County), Erin T. Hofmeyer of Cleves (Hamilton County) and Timothy E. McIntire of Miami Township (Montgomery County) reappointed to the Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Athletic Trainers Board for terms beginning Dec. 11, 2020 and ending Aug. 27, 2023.
- Tonya K. Schaeffer of Loveland (Clermont County) to the Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2021 and ending Oct. 10, 2023.
- James G. Minikowski of Solon (Cuyahoga County) and Hollie R. Hinton of Steubenville (Jefferson County) reappointed to the Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board for terms beginning Dec. 11, 2020 and ending Oct. 10, 2023.
- Nancy L. Mills of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the State Speech and Hearing Professionals Board for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2021 and ending March 22, 2023.
- Randall W. Leite of Hilliard (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood for a term beginning Dec. 11, 2020 and ending July 30, 2022.
- Thomas Price of Delaware (Delaware County) reappointed to the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission for a term beginning Dec. 11, 2020 and ending June 30, 2024.
- Paul E. Yankie of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the Board of Building Standards for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2021 and ending Oct. 13, 2021.
- Timothy P. Galvin of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Board of Building Standards for a term beginning Dec. 7, 2020 and ending Oct. 13, 2024.
- Joseph A. Starkey of Waterford (Washington County) to the Technical Advisory Council on Oil and Gas for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2021 and ending Jan. 31, 2023.

Gov. Mike DeWine on Friday announced the appointment of Zachary L. Saunders to the Athens County Court of Common Pleas, Probate and Juvenile Division. Saunders, of The Plains, will assume office on Thursday, Dec. 17, and will be replacing Judge Kenneth

Ryan. He will begin a full-term commencing Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The appointment of Stephanie McCloud as director of the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) cleared the Senate this week even as Democratic members in committee and on the floor objected to her lack of a medical background or public health work. McCloud, however, was confirmed on a party line vote.

HUMAN SERVICES

Nonprofit LeadingAge Ohio recently launched a new program called "It's OK to Grieve" focused on connecting Ohioans to bereavement resources. The campaign will feature digital and social media messaging around the state highlighting resources for Ohioans who may be struggling with losses from COVID-19 or other grief.

JUDICIAL

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor presided virtually over the winter 2020 Bar Admission Ceremony for 721 candidates Monday. Applicants passed Ohio's first remote bar exam and met all other admission requirements.

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor announced a pair of judicial orders addressing the projected winter increase in COVID-19 cases. The first tolls case time standards for 90 days, while the second temporarily waives in-person education courses for guardians ad litem in favor of remote learning, effective Jan. 1.

State Medical Board staff must verbally threaten a physician suspected of sexual improprieties with license suspension or worse during a noncustodial interview if the doctor expects later to suppress as "coerced" comments suggesting guilt. That's true, the Ohio Supreme Court said Tuesday, even though state law warns doctors against license loss for failing to answer investigators truthfully. Medical board licensees, moreover, must actually assert their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination during an "investigative office conference" or "investigative interview" not involving police to suppress questionable statements during a subsequent criminal trial. The ruling came in the case of former Dr. James Gideon, a onetime Allen County rheumatologist who lost his medical license after a number of women accused him of sexual imposition in 2017. Gideon faced parallel investigations by the medical board and police.

The Ohio Board of Professional Conduct is announcing new leadership for 2021, electing Lucas County attorney Patricia Wise as board chair and Lorain County Court of Common Pleas Court Judge D. Chris Cook as board vice chair. They will serve one-year terms commencing Friday, Jan. 1.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Veteran lawmaker Sen. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo) crossed the aisle Thursday to join Republicans in a rare rebuke of legislation called for a committee vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Senate Majority Floor Leader Matt Huffman (R-Lima) cast doubt on claims township police would not use expanded jurisdictional authority over interstate highways for speed traps and new revenue streams, as HB539 (Ghanbari-Blair) went down 5-5. The bill would have extended interstate ticketing, currently reserved for townships with populations exceeding 50,000, to those with 5,000-50,000. It had been amended minutes before passage in the House Criminal Justice Committee on Dec. 3 to earmark all moneys to the county and to keep township officers in their own jurisdictions. It went on to pass the House that same day on a vote of 73-20.

MARIJUANA/HEMP

More than 150,000 patients are now registered under the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program (MMCP), according to the Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP). A total of 154,376 patients are registered, OBP said in announcing November's updated MMCP patient and caregiver numbers.

MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM

Members of the Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee (JMOC) Thursday morning approved the hiring of Corey Schaal as assistant director. Most recently, Schaal has been an adjunct professor at Columbus State Community College. Prior to that, Schaal was the executive director of the Ohio Respiratory Care Board as well as having served as a research and policy analyst for the Ohio Supreme Court. Other items on the agenda included an overview of Optumas' actuarial review for JMOC which will occur in two phases, JMOC Executive Director Jada Brady told the group.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

After serving in the Ohio National Guard for more than 30 years, U.S. Rep. Steve Stivers (R-Columbus) was promoted to major general Friday. Stivers is one of the highest-ranking National Guard members to simultaneously serve in Congress. He completed tours of duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom (2004-05) in Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar and Djibouti, where he led 400 soldiers and contractors and earned the Bronze Star for his leadership.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) will offer virtual hikes in lieu of the traditional in-person guided tours held in January and February of each year. The naturalist-led, online series will give Ohioans an opportunity to plan their own winter hikes while maintaining a safe social distance, the department said.

The ODNR Division of Wildlife (DOW) has identified a positive test for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in a wild white-tailed deer in Wyandot County. This is the state's first case of CWD detected in the wild in at least 18 years, according to the department.

A creative approach to a challenging situation has earned Hocking Hills State Park the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD) President's Award for Innovation, according to ODNR. The award recognized the park's new trail design, which accommodates social distancing guidelines and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ODNR announced it will offer \$3 million in grant funding to improve motorized boat access at public facilities across the state. Managed by ODNR's Division of Parks and Watercraft, the Cooperative Boating Facility grant is a competitive grant program offering 100 percent reimbursement to eligible political subdivisions such as municipalities, townships, counties, joint recreational districts, park districts, conservancy districts and state and federal agencies.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

The Ohio State Bar Foundation (OSBF) recently awarded \$444,852 to Ohio nonprofit organizations during its fall grant cycle. Each funded project supports the OSBF's mission of promoting the pursuit of justice and public understanding of the rule of law.

POLITICS

Six Democrats who want to succeed David Pepper as chairman of the Ohio Democratic Party (ODP) addressed the party's executive committee meeting Tuesday evening, promising to rebuild the party and to be competitive across the state. They included Antoinette Wilson, a political consultant who most recently helped to run Jennifer Brunner's successful Ohio Supreme Court campaign; former state Sen. Lou Gentile; Will Klatt, a Franklin County activist; Gary Josephson, who ran for the Ohio House but lost in a Democratic primary earlier this year; Liz Walters, a former state party executive director and a member of Summit County Council; and Vanessa Enoch, who lost congressional races to U.S. Rep. Warren Davidson (R-Troy) in 2018 and 2020.

POLLS/STUDIES

Despite 60 percent of Americans saying they believe Democrat Joe Biden's election as legitimate, 77 percent of Republicans believe there was widespread voter fraud, according to a recent poll conducted by Quinnipiac University. The likelihood that voters reported that they believed the election results or not varied on party lines, with 98 percent of Democrats believing the election results, compared to 62 percent of independents and only 23 percent of Republicans who said the same.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS) announced Wednesday that it is still accepting grant applications for costs related to personal protective equipment (PPE), with the window closing either on Thursday, Dec. 31 or when funds are exhausted. The DPS Division of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is offering one-time awards of up to \$1,500 for qualifying PPE purchases by eligible EMS and medical transportation agencies this year, with the total funding amount set at \$425,000. Information on the grants is available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/COVID-19PPEgrant>.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose warned Ohio businesses of a phishing email scam he said he was alerted to Monday, telling businesses not to click a link in the email alleging to be from the Ohio Secretary of State's (SOS) office. It is not. The email tells recipients that they must click a link to "validate" their profile so they don't experience any delays in service. The clicked link then asks detailed information to be submitted, including the individual's Social Security number.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Kent State University (KSU) was taken to task over anime "pornography" one legislator was unwilling to read at Monday's Controlling Board hearing. Board President W. "Fletch" Zimpher questioned its relevance to the school's capital request, but Rep. Shane Wilkin (R-Hillsboro) said both concerned KSU's state funding. The university's \$131,000 request for "x-ray scattering" equipment was one 45 agency submissions with a waiver of competitive selection, by Senate President Pro Tem Bob Peterson's (R-Sabina) count. He said that was nearly half the day's requests -- "higher than we would like to see."

TECHNOLOGY

A pilot project in the Marysville area will connect 90 households and 10 small businesses with high-speed Internet provided by SpaceX's satellite broadband service early next year, according to a Wednesday announcement by Lt. Gov. Jon Husted and other officials. The project will focus on Allen Township in Union County and is the largest effort in the Midwest yet by the SpaceX service, called Starlink. A release from Husted's office said the project is a collaboration between the state's InnovateOhio and BroadbandOhio initiatives, economic development nonprofit JobsOhio, Marysville city leaders and business leaders in Union County.

TREASURER OF STATE

Ohio Treasurer Robert Sprague announced Wednesday that his office's STABLE Account program which provides savings accounts for people with disabilities has now exceeded 20,000 total active accounts, with program participation more than doubling in less than two years.

UTILITIES

Among the 31 applicants for the vacant seat on the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) are outgoing Ohio Supreme Court Justice Judith French and Sen. Sean O'Brien (D-Cortland), both of whom lost their reelection efforts in November. PUCO's Nominating Council will meet Monday, Dec. 21 to recommend four names to Gov. Mike DeWine who will then make the final decision about whom to appoint for the remaining three years of the Sam Randazzo term which expires on April 10, 2024.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) Nominating Council issued its second call for candidates in two weeks Monday after previously launching a search for the vacant seat of its embattled former chairman, Sam Randazzo, whose unexpired term extends through 2024.

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