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**Ohio Association of Ambulatory Surgery Centers  
Legislative Update**

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- HB90**      **OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNOR'S AND HEALTH ORDERS** (WIGGAM S, EDWARDS J) To establish legislative oversight of the Governor's executive orders, certain public health orders, and emergency rules, including by establishing the Ohio Health Oversight and Advisory Committee.  
*Current Status:* 2/24/2021 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, House State and Local Government, (Third Hearing)  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-90>
- 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  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-110>
- HB122**      **TELEHEALTH SERVICES** (FRAIZER M, HOLMES A) To establish and modify requirements regarding the provision of telehealth services, to establish a provider credentialing program within the Medicaid program, to revise the law governing the State Medical Board's One-Bite Program, and to extend the suspension of certain programs and requirements under the state's insurance laws until January 1, 2026.  
*Current Status:* 12/22/2021 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. 3/23/22  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-122>
- HB160**      **HEALTH CARE COST ESTIMATES** (HOLMES A) Regarding the provision of health care cost estimates.  
*Current Status:* 3/10/2021 - House Insurance, (First Hearing)  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-160>
- HB196**      **REGULATE SURGICAL ASSISTANTS** (KELLY B, CARRUTHERS S) To regulate the practice of surgical assistants.  
*Current Status:* 12/1/2022 - **PASSED BY HOUSE**; Vote 69-12  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-196>



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- HB218 COVID-19 VACCINE - QUALIFIED IMMUNITIES** (CUTRONA A) To address medical requirements for employees and students; to address qualified civil immunity regarding certain coronaviruses; to authorize emergency medical technicians to administer COVID-19 tests; to expressly cover COVID-19 vaccine injuries under the workers' compensation system; and to repeal sections 3792.05, 3792.07, and 3792.08 of the Revised Code on September 30, 2025.  
**Current Status:** 12/7/2021 - Senate General Government Budget, (Second Hearing)  
**State Bill Page:** <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-218>
- 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  
**State Bill Page:** <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-267>
- HB356 REDUCE ABUSE OF PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS** (LOYCHIK M, BIRD A) Regarding a proposal to reduce the abuse of prescription opioids, to establish addiction treatment facilities, to increase penalties for drug trafficking violations, to modify penalties for drug possession, to require an offender convicted of a drug possession or drug trafficking offense involving certain drugs to be subject to ten years of post-release control, to allow a criminal defendant who has a severe substance use disorder involving certain drugs to be confined by a state detoxification provider while awaiting trial, to create restitution work programs, and to make an appropriation.  
**Current Status:** 4/6/2022 - House Criminal Justice, (Third Hearing)  
**State Bill Page:** <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-356>
- 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  
**State Bill Page:** <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-388>



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- 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  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-401>
- HB411 INDIVIDUAL PRIVACY, ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ACT** (CLICK G, GRENDALL D) To prohibit mandatory disclosures related to an individual's COVID-19 vaccination status, to name the act the Individual Privacy and Anti-Discrimination Act, and to declare an emergency.  
*Current Status:* 9/8/2021 - Introduced  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-411>
- HB424 COVID-19 VACCINE - QUALIFIED IMMUNITIES** (KOEHLER K) To prohibit a political subdivision, public official, public school, state agency, or state institution of higher education from taking certain actions related to the COVID-19 vaccine, to codify the qualified civil immunities under H.B. 606 of the 133rd General Assembly permanently, to repeal section 3792.05 of the Revised Code on the date that is two years after the effective date of that section, and to declare an emergency.  
*Current Status:* 9/20/2021 - Introduced  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-424>
- HB425 COVID-19 - GENETIC TECHNOLOGIES** (WIGGAM S, HALL T) To prohibit certain actions related to COVID-19 and genetic technologies.  
*Current Status:* 9/20/2021 - Introduced  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-425>
- HB435 VACCINE REQUIREMENTS** (CARFAGNA R, SEITZ B) To address COVID-19 vaccine requirements for employees and students; to extend certain timelines for qualified civil immunity and expand immunity to include hearing aid dealers and hearing aid fitters; to authorize emergency medical technicians to administer COVID-19 tests; to expressly cover COVID-19 vaccine injuries under the workers' compensation system; and to repeal sections 3792.05, 3792.06, 3792.07, and 3792.08 of the Revised Code on June 30, 2023.  
*Current Status:* 10/13/2021 - Bills for Third Consideration; (Pending Committee Report)  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-435>



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- HB454**     **SAFE ACT** (CLICK G, GRENDALL D) To prohibit certain procedures to alter a minor child's sex and to designate this act as the Save Adolescents from Experimentation (SAFE) Act.  
*Current Status:* 11/16/2022 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED & AMENDED**, House Families, Aging and Human Services, (Fifth Hearing)  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-454>
- HB477**     **EXPULSION, TERMINATION BASED ON VACCINATION STATUS** (RICHARDSON T) To prevent expulsion from school and termination from employment based on COVID-19 vaccination status.  
*Current Status:* 11/1/2021 - Introduced  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-477>
- HB481**     **COVID VACCINE, PASSPORT PROTECTION ACT** (JORDAN K) To enact the COVID-19 Vaccination and Passport Protection Act to prohibit schools, institutions of higher education, employers, and places of public accommodation from requiring COVID-19 vaccines or proof of vaccination.  
*Current Status:* 11/8/2021 - Introduced  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-481>
- HB489**     **INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE ACT** (CLICK G) To enact the Inalienable Rights of Conscience Act regarding students and employees who object to certain vaccines and other treatments based on reasons of conscience, including religious convictions.  
*Current Status:* 11/16/2021 - Introduced  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-489>
- HB598**     **PROHIBIT ABORTIONS BASED ON CONDITION** (SCHMIDT J) To enact the Human Life Protection Act to prohibit abortions based upon a condition precedent.  
*Current Status:* 5/26/2022 - House Government Oversight, (Third Hearing)  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-598>
- HB704**     **DESIGNATE PERSONHOOD FROM CONCEPTION** (CLICK G) To enact The Personhood Act to recognize the personhood of an unborn human individual from conception.  
*Current Status:* 11/15/2022 - Referred to Committee House Government Oversight  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-704>



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- HB714**     **ADVANCED PRACTICE RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS** (YOUNG T, JOHN M) To license advanced practice respiratory therapists and to amend the version of section 4761.01 of the Revised Code that is scheduled to take effect September 30, 2024, to continue the change on and after that date.  
*Current Status:* 11/15/2022 - Referred to Committee House Health  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-714>
- SB22**     **LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT-PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS** (JOHNSON T, MCCOLLEY R) To establish legislative oversight of orders issued by the executive branch, including by establishing the Ohio Health Oversight and Advisory Committee.  
*Current Status:* 3/24/2021 - Consideration of Governor's Veto; House Overrides Veto, Vote 62-35  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-22>
- SB150**     **NONCOMPETE PROVISIONS-PHYSICIANS** (JOHNSON T, WILLIAMS S) To prohibit the use of noncompete provisions in physician employment contracts.  
*Current Status:* 10/27/2021 - Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity, (Third Hearing)  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-150>
- SB157**     **ATTEMPTED ABORTIONS** (JOHNSON T, HUFFMAN S) To require reports to be made after a child is born alive following an abortion or attempted abortion, to establish certain civil or criminal penalties for failing to preserve the health or life of such a child, and to make changes regarding variances from written transfer agreements.  
*Current Status:* 12/22/2021 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. 3/23/22  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-157>
- SB161**     **SURGICAL SMOKE** (BRENNER A) Regarding surgical smoke.  
*Current Status:* 3/16/2022 - Senate Health, (Third Hearing)  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-161>



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**SB321**     **REGARDING APRN AUTHORITY** (ROMANCHUK M) Regarding the authority of advanced practice registered nurses, and to amend the versions of sections 3701.5010, 3705.30, and 3929.67 of the Revised Code that are scheduled to take effect on September 30, 2024, to continue the changes to those sections on and after that date.

**Current Status:** 5/18/2022 - Referred to Committee Senate Health

**State Bill Page:** <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-321>

**SB322**     **SEX OFFENSES, MEDICAL PROFESSIONS** (HACKETT R) Regarding sex offenses and individuals regulated by the State Medical Board.

**Current Status:** 5/18/2022 - Referred to Committee Senate Health

**State Bill Page:** <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-322>

**Friday, Dec. 9, 2022**

### AGING

Gov. Mike DeWine, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS), the Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) and AAA are encouraging Ohioans to "stay fit to drive" during the American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA) Older Driver Safety Awareness Week, which began Monday, Dec. 5 and ends Friday, Dec. 9. People aged 65 and older make up the fastest-growing segment of drivers nationally and in Ohio, according to ODA. By 2030, the state will have more than 4.8 million residents who are 65 or older. Nationally, the total number of estimated fatalities for the age 65-and-older age group jumped by 14 percent in 2021, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

### ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Artists and organizations can now apply for grants from the Ohio Arts Council (OAC) now that the OAC Board made a number of changes to the grant guidelines for FY24-25. The council said the changes are "designed to make our grant programs more accessible and equitable, streamline application and reporting requirements, consolidate duplicative programs and create new pathways for funding individual artists' career development."

### BALLOT ISSUES

Attorney General Dave Yost Friday rejected the summary of a proposed initiated statute that would end qualified immunity in Ohio for employees of political subdivisions. The proposed amendment would remove qualified immunity for employees of political





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subdivisions for injury, death, or loss of person or property allegedly caused by any act or omission in connection with governmental or proprietary function. The petition was submitted to the attorney general's office on Nov. 22 by Cynthia Brown of Canal Winchester, Hamza Khabir of Bedford, Jenny Sue Rowe of Mansfield, and Alicia Kirkman and Brenda Bickerstaff, both of Cleveland. In rejecting the proposed petition, Yost's office said it did not meet the requirement that the summary be a fair and truthful statement of the proposed law or constitutional amendment. Yost also said "the summary does not properly advise a potential signer of the proposed amendment statute's character and limitations." More specifically, he said the summary contains a material omission, and the title of the summary is misleading.

### **FY22-23 BUDGET**

Major tax sources each netted tens of millions of dollars over estimates in November to bring the fiscal year overage to-date close to half a billion dollars, according to preliminary figures from the Office of Budget and Management (OBM). Overall tax collections reached \$2.48 billion, exceeding estimates by \$128.6 million or 5.5 percent. Income taxes contributed the most to that performance, reaching \$771.2 million, 6.9 percent or \$50 million ahead of expectations. For FY23 so far, income taxes are up by 6.6 percent or \$262.5 million.

### **CHILDREN/FAMILIES**

Adding coverage of doula services during pregnancy to Medicaid can help Ohio address its dismal rates of infant and maternal death among Black Ohioans, organizations focused on child and maternal health and wellbeing told the Senate Health Committee. The committee heard proponent testimony Tuesday on HB142, which would add doula coverage to Ohio Medicaid. Erin Ryan, director of the Center for Maternal & Young Child Health at Groundwork Ohio, said Black women's concerns are frequently dismissed or downplayed because of racism and bias within the health care system, leading to health consequences and even deaths. "Access to doulas, which are trained, non-clinical professionals who advocate for pregnant mothers as they navigate their care and the health care system, can provide needed additional support, create a more supportive environment during delivery, and make the experience of pregnancy much less difficult for the mothers rightfully advocating for their own lives and the lives of their children," Ryan said.

### **CORONAVIRUS/MONKEYPOX**

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) reported 16,061 new COVID-19 cases in the past seven days, after previously reporting 16,091 over an eight-day period that spanned Thursday, Nov. 24 to Thursday, Dec. 1 as a result of Thanksgiving Day. In the six days



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from Thursday, Nov. 17 to Wednesday, Nov. 23 ODH had reported 9,424 cases. Hospitalizations also rose significantly in the last two sets of data, from 383 on Nov. 23 to 607 on Dec. 1 and 605 Thursday. There were 28 ICU admissions in the Nov. 23 data, 42 on Dec. 1 and 37 Thursday as well, while deaths numbered 75 on Nov. 23, 92 on Dec. 1 and 86 on Dec. 8. Since the pandemic began ODH has reported 3.26 million cases, 131,574 hospitalizations, 14,584 ICU admissions and 40,644 deaths. ODH also reported Thursday that an additional 69,074 people received the bivalent vaccine booster in Ohio over the past seven days, bringing the total to 1.47 million.

ODH also reported an additional three "confirmed monkeypox/orthopoxvirus cases" Thursday, a virus which the World Health Organization has begun referring to as "mpox." The total number reported by ODH is now 383, along with 41 total hospitalizations and two deaths associated with the virus. There have been 10,395 vaccinations in 81 Ohio counties; that data lags by an average of four days.

### **CRIME AND PUNISHMENT**

Prosecutors and public defenders generally said the benefits of criminal justice omnibus SB288 outweigh its faults during testimony Thursday to the House Criminal Justice Committee. The panel heard from an invited list of proponents and interested parties representing prosecutors, public defenders, judges, community corrections and other players. Louis Tobin of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association said issues the bill aims to fix are more important than the provisions to which his group objects. He lauded language on strangulation offenses, speedy trial standards, the statute of limitations for attempted murder, consent for searches for offenders on probation, and OVI sentencing. Prosecutors maintain concerns about provisions on records expungement and early release, Tobin said. "I don't want to belabor these, but we already ... have 13 early release mechanisms in the Ohio Revised Code," Tobin said, later adding, "It has been our position that people should serve their minimum term, basically because it's a matter of transparency."

### **DEATH PENALTY**

The Ohio Supreme Court wants to expand the right to counsel to all stages of Death Row appeals and require lead defense attorneys and co-counsel to be certified by the Court's Commission on Appointment of Counsel in Capital Cases. Death Row attorneys would have to possess at least five years of experience in criminal litigation and, within the previous 10 years, have represented one or more inmates in capital post-conviction or habeas corpus cases to serve as lead counsel. Co-counsels in Death Row post-conviction petitions and appeals also would require commission certification but could substitute non-capital case experience in the previous 10 years. The Supreme Court is seeking





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public comment on its proposed Rules for Appointment of Counsel in Capital Cases until Thursday, Jan. 12.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

With a working-age population smaller than in 2010 and likely to be smaller still in 2030 under current trends, Ohio's main focus must be on people and their talents, Lt. Gov. Jon Husted told an economic development conference in Columbus on Friday. The lieutenant governor addressed those gathered at Ohio State University for Economic Development 411, the annual meeting of One Columbus, the central Ohio partner for JobsOhio. "It's shrinking in Ohio and in every state that borders us," Husted said of the working-age population. He said businesses that don't have personnel dedicated to interacting with educational institutions in the area are missing an opportunity.

The DeWine administration announced Tuesday approval of funding for demolition at 2,277 sites in 42 counties, enabling new economic development and housing opportunities as part of the Ohio Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program. The projects are being funded through set-aside grants announced for each county in July, as part of an overall total of nearly \$150 million for the program. The Tuesday funding totals \$54.44 million, including \$20.08 million in the county set-aside amounts and \$35.3 million in additional funds to cover expenses beyond the set-aside amount.

Gov. Mike DeWine's administration announced Wednesday support for 12 mixed-use development projects across Ohio, saying they are expected to create over \$1.29 billion in new payroll and \$2.3 billion in investments. The Tax Credit Authority approved \$100 million in tax credits during its Wednesday meeting.

The DeWine administration announced Wednesday the approval of assistance for 14 projects expected to create 1,663 new jobs and retain 3,457 jobs statewide. During its monthly meeting, the Ohio Tax Credit Authority (TCA) reviewed economic development proposals brought by JobsOhio and its regional partners. The projects are expected to collectively result in more than \$99.7 million in new payroll and spur more than \$202.6 million in investments across Ohio.

### **EDUCATION**

Senators generally agreed on the need for education governance reform but not necessarily the latest vehicle for doing so Wednesday as the chamber debated and ultimately passed overhaul measure SB178 in a vote that included a bit of aisle-crossing. The Senate adopted SB178 (Reineke) on a vote of 22-7, with Sens. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg) and Kristina Roegner (R-Hudson) joining most Democrats in dissent and Sen. Dale Martin (D-Cleveland) voting in favor. The legislation would move most of the



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authority now under the State Board of Education, Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and state superintendent to a new Department of Education and Workforce (DEW), which would be led by a gubernatorial appointee. Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima), who made the rare move of stepping down from the dais to argue for the bill from the floor, recounted his experiences tangling with ODE and the board as a legislator, describing them as "a government bureaucracy that has no accountability and no transparency." He said one of his first major projects upon joining the Senate, education deregulation measure 132-SB216, included numerous suggestions from school districts to get rid of "abuse heaped upon them by the Ohio Department of Education." He even characterized some actions of the agency related to school and parental choice issues as "malevolence." Sen. Bill Reineke (R-Tiffin), sponsor of the bill, said the current structure has not adequately addressed problems like school transportation and chronic absenteeism, and does not properly prioritize career pathways beyond the four-year degree route. He also criticized ODE and the board's track record in implementing important programs, like the Afterschool Child Enrichment education savings accounts.

Transgender girls would still be banned from participating in girls' school sports, but students would not face the prospect of a physician verifying their "internal and external reproductive anatomy" if someone disputed their sex, under amendments adopted in a Senate committee Tuesday. The Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee Tuesday heard HB151 (Jones), which proposes changes to the teacher residency program but picked up language on trans athletes originally proposed in HB61 (Powell-Stoltzfus) on the floor of the House. That language included a process for resolving a dispute on an athlete's sex by requiring a signed physician's statement indicating sex based on criteria including anatomy, "endogenously produced levels of testosterone" and an analysis of genetic makeup. Under AM4100-1, moved Tuesday by Sen. Louis Blessing (R-Cincinnati), the physician verification process is dropped in favor of determining a participant's sex based on the sex designation on their birth records.

Legislators joined business and education leaders Wednesday to applaud Ohio students who recently won regional computer science "hackathon" competitions, part of the observation of Computer Science Education Week. Two student teams apiece from regional hackathons held earlier this year in Cleveland and Columbus were hosted at the Ohio Chamber of Commerce Wednesday morning before crossing the street for recognition at the Statehouse where Sen. Hearcel Craig (D-Columbus) spoke about their achievements. TECH CORPS, a nonprofit that provides computer science programming for students, put on the hackathons in November, asking dozens of students to develop apps to "educate, excite and empower" their communities.

Each of Ohio's 51 educational service centers (ESCs) applied for and received the "High Performing ESC" designation from ODE, the Ohio ESC Association (OESCA) reports. According to the association, a "high performing ESC" has generated total cost savings of



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at least 5 percent for its client school districts for primary services secured from the ESC instead of another source. The percentage of savings for Ohio's ESCs exceeds that benchmark, actually ranging from 14 percent to 69 percent savings in 2022, OESCA said.

The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) Thursday approved more than \$210 million in state funding for five school construction projects. Combined with \$142 million in local funding, the projects represent more than \$353 million in public construction work.

### **ELECTIONS**

The Senate Local Government and Elections Committee Tuesday accepted a substitute version of HB458 (Hall), adding among other provisions a requirement that Ohioans have a valid photo ID to vote in Ohio. The bill, which would eliminate August special elections, is expected to get a committee vote next week as the 134th General Assembly looks to wrap up its business. Under the photo ID requirement, all Ohioans will be eligible to receive a free state identification card. The bill would also require absentee ballots to be received by boards of elections by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day. Currently, boards of elections can accept late arriving absentee ballots as long as they are postmarked by Election Day.

### **ELECTIONS 2022**

A hearing on campaign finance complaints against former Republican gubernatorial candidate Joe Blystone was pushed to January by the Ohio Elections Commission Thursday as the commission's director said he was discussing a possible settlement with Blystone's campaign. Members of the commission, however, said they wanted to move forward with a full hearing because of "substantial issues" that have come up in the case. The new hearing was scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 5. Blystone, who lost a primary against Gov. Mike DeWine earlier this year, is facing allegations from multiple sources, including the secretary of state's office, which allege that the campaign had "continued blatant and knowing campaign finance violations." A number of individuals have also filed complaints saying the Blystone campaign had not properly reported contributions.

### **EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT**

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) said Friday that total nonfarm payroll employment increased by 263,000 in November while the national jobless rate remained at 3.7 percent. The number of unemployed persons was essentially unchanged at 6.0 million. BLS said that among the major worker groups, the unemployment rates for adult men (3.4 percent), adult women (3.3 percent), teenagers (11.3 percent), Whites (3.2 percent), Blacks (5.7 percent), Asians (2.7 percent), and Hispanics (3.9 percent) showed



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little or no change over the month. Among the unemployed, the number of permanent job losers rose by 127,000 to 1.4 million in November. The number of persons on temporary layoff changed little at 803,000. The number of long-term unemployed (those jobless for 27 weeks or more) was little changed at 1.2 million in November. The long-term unemployed accounted for 20.6 percent of all unemployed persons.

### ENERGY/UTILITIES

Ohio energy costs are rolling back slightly as the state enters the thick of the winter heating season, with AES's electric auction price dropping more than 7 percent since last spring and by the same percentage from FirstEnergy's megawatt hour (MWh) result for October. The recent wholesale cost was \$113.42 MWh for AES compared to \$122.50 in April. Spring prices continued into early autumn, when the FirstEnergy rate was \$122.30 MWh. AEP Ohio's auction price softened to \$119.98 by early November.

"This is the first time we've ever seen something like this." The 13-state electric transmission authority encompassing Ohio said Thursday that American Electric Power (AEP) blackouts descending on the state capital in June presented the agency with an unparalleled challenge. After six months of review, PJM Interconnection disclosed that AEP's vegetation management had affected power lines in the Columbus area, though officials said they had relied on the utility and had not conducted their own review of vegetation "grow-in" near AEP lines. Senior Lead Engineer Jack O'Neil of PJM's Demand Response Operations and Senior Dispatch Manager Donnie Bielak updated its Operating Committee on recurring blackouts that affected the state capital over three days in early summer. In a virtual presentation, O'Neil said the Marion Sub-Zone, which lies in AEP's service territory, had suffered 21 hours of outages, including more than five and a half hours on June 14, over 10 and a half hours on June 15, and four hours of outages on June 16.

### ENVIRONMENT

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) Director Laurie Stevenson will retire at the end of 2022, governor's office spokesperson Dan Tierney told *Hannah News* on Wednesday. In her resignation letter to Gov. Mike DeWine, Stevenson said she's proud of her 34-year career at Ohio EPA.

### FEDERAL

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) delivered his farewell speech on the U.S. Senate floor Thursday, wishing his successor J.D. Vance well, urging bipartisanship, and calling for the preservation of the Senate filibuster. Portman discussed the importance of "servant leadership" over politics, and pointed to his mentor, former President George H.W. Bush,



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who gave him his first political job and then hired him in the White House. He said Bush saw public service as a noble calling and helped young people like himself see that by example. He said he saw that same commitment later working under George W. Bush.

### GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

House Speaker-elect Derek Merrin (R-Monclova) Tuesday released the House session schedule for 2023. The schedule includes opening day session on Tuesday, Jan. 3, a start to committee hearings on Thursday, Jan. 5, and a final session of the year on Wednesday, Dec. 13. In a change from recent practice, all sessions are scheduled for 2 p.m. instead of 1 p.m.

The Senate voted 22-7 on Wednesday to pass a broad agriculture and environment bill, HB507 (Koehler), which originally dealt with allowing the sale of chicks in smaller lots but picked up several amendments in committee. Among them are state preemption of local restrictions on pesticide use, re-definition of natural gas as a "green energy" source and the shift from authorizing oil and gas development on state lands to requiring it. Sen. Tim Schaffer (R-Lancaster), who led his chamber's deliberations on the bill as chair of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, said the oil and gas language would address delays in the leasing of state parcels but would not permit surface drilling in parks.

The Senate rejected House amendments Wednesday to SB185 (Schaffer), which addresses maintenance of firearm rights during states of emergency. Huffman said he did not agree with a mandatory sentencing provision added in the other chamber. "I don't like mandatory sentencing provisions because not every case, factually, is the same, and that's why we have judges, to make decisions. You can be charged with the same crime and guilty of the same crime, and there's a big variety of facts. If you look at judges and say, 'You don't get to decide anything,' a lot of injustice happens," Huffman said.

The chamber did concur with House amendments to SB210 (Gavarone), which addresses post-nuptial agreements, voting 28-1 to agree with changes related to the appointment of acting judges.

Also passing the Senate during Wednesday's session were the following:

- **HCR32** (Lightbody-Lampton), recommending the Air Force Research Laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base recognize William Cavanaugh for his contribution to the design of the installation's Bio Acoustics Laboratory. It passed 28-0.

- **HCR27** (Troy), recognizing victims of Agent Orange during the Vietnam War. It passed 28-0.





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- **HB23** (Plummer-West), requiring first responders to undergo training on dementia. It passed 28-0.
- **HB223** (Hillyer), regarding the ability of businesses to deduct sales tax remitted to the state for bad debts from private label credit cards administered by third parties. It passed 23-6.
- **HB286** (Seitz), allowing those challenging administrative actions of state agencies to file suit in courts outside Franklin County. The bill was amended on the floor to specify challenges to emergency orders can also be filed in other counties' courts rather than the Ohio Court of Claims. It then passed 25-4.
- **HB509** (John-Fowler Arthur), which makes numerous occupational licensing revisions based on the review process for occupational licensing requirements laid out in 132-SB255 (McColley). It passed 29-0.
- **SB346** (Johnson), which designates April 27 as "Ulysses S. Grant Day." It passed 28-0.

The House Government Oversight Committee Wednesday heard from numerous opponents to a proposed constitutional amendment that would require future constitutional amendments to get at least 60 percent of the vote in order to pass, saying it would take power away from Ohioans and give more power to special interests. The committee received in-person and written testimony from 33 individuals on HJR6 (Stewart), with only two of those proponents, neither of whom testified in person. Hearings continued on Thursday when committee Chair Shane Wilkin (R-Hillsboro) said there is "a chance" they will meet Monday, Dec. 12. The committee heard testimony from one proponent and one opponent on HJR6 but removed a possible vote shortly before the meeting. A sixth hearing and possible vote on HB294 (Seitz-Ray) was also taken off the day's agenda.

National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) CEO Tim Storey Tuesday shared the organization's forecast for trending issues and themes among state legislatures in 2023. Workforce, labor and employment issues were number one on Storey's list of "hot" topics heading into the new year. Based on conversations he's had with state legislative leaders, he said he has never heard such "unanimity" among states about what their top priority will be. "This is an economic issue. It's a fiscal issue. It's a budget issue," he said, adding that it "underwrites everything." He noted the workforce issue also cuts across different industries and sectors. Unemployment remains low, but inflation is occurring from high demand, he said. Another major theme for 2023 that Storey highlighted is the "historic" strength of state budgets across the country.





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In other action, the House Health Committee reported out HB749 (Ginter) which designates Oct. 23 as “Aromatic L-Amino Acid Decarboxylase Deficiency Awareness Day”; the Senate General Government Budget Committee reported out HB107 (Baldrige) which revises the elevator law; and the Senate Insurance Committee reported out HB575 (Cutrona) which deals with fraternal benefit society solvency regulations.

### GOVERNOR

Gov. Mike DeWine said Thursday that he's considering numerous applications to fill the forthcoming vacancy on the Ohio Supreme Court. "There's a lot of people who are applying. I'm getting calls from people every day suggesting different names. No decision has been made," DeWine told reporters outside the Ohio Expositions Commission meeting. The governor wouldn't confirm or deny that Hamilton County Prosecutor Joe Deters is a candidate for the position. The vacancy will be created when Justice Sharon Kennedy becomes chief justice of the Ohio Supreme Court on Sunday, Jan. 1, 2023. DeWine's appointee will serve the remainder of Kennedy's unexpired term as an associate justice. Kennedy was elected to a six-year term as an associate justice in 2020.

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Jared Chad Ebbing of Coldwater (Mercer County) to the Wright State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2031.
- Deborah Goddard of Howard (Knox County) and Christopher Traill Dobeck of Munson (Geauga County) reappointed to the State Auctioneers Commission for terms beginning Dec. 7, 2022 and ending Oct. 9, 2025.
- Lloyd Victor Graham Jr. of Grove City (Franklin County) reappointed to the State Board of Career Colleges and Schools for a term beginning Dec. 7, 2022 and ending Nov. 20, 2027.
- Wendy Humphrey Doolittle of Springfield (Clark County), Kenneth R. Yeager of Newark (Licking County) and Georden Patrick Burton of Galloway (Franklin County) reappointed to the Chemical Dependency Professionals Board for terms beginning Dec. 24, 2022 and ending Dec. 23, 2025.
- Joseph F. Denk Jr. of Fairview Park (Cuyahoga County) and Julienne R. Cromwell of Milford (Clermont County) reappointed to the Board of Building Standards for terms beginning Dec. 7, 2022 and ending Oct. 13, 2026.



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- Gary R. Salmon of Oxford (Butler County) reappointed to the Sewage Treatment System Technical Advisory Council for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2023 and ending Dec. 31, 2025.
- Glen Martin Vonderembse of Milford (Clermont County) to the Sewage Treatment System Technical Advisory Council for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2023 and ending Dec. 31, 2025.
- Cassandra Ridenour of Zanesville (Muskingum County) to the Reclamation Commission for a term beginning Dec. 7, 2022 and ending June 28, 2027.
- Christopher D. Mucher of Yellow Springs (Greene County) to the Ohio Cemetery Dispute Resolution Commission for a term beginning Dec. 6, 2022 and ending July 1, 2023.
- Kyle Matthew Kissel of Canton (Stark County) to the Advisory Board on Amusement Ride Safety for a term beginning Jan. 2, 2023 and ending Jan. 1, 2029.
- Yahaira Rose of Westerville (Franklin County) to the Commission on Hispanic-Latino Affairs for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2023 and ending Oct. 7, 2023.
- Carol Lynn Garner of Mount Vernon (Knox County) reappointed to the Board of Trustees of the Martha Kinney Cooper Ohioana Library Association for a term beginning Dec. 7, 2022 and ending Sept. 15, 2026.
- Wendy-Jean Catherine Grove of Columbus (Franklin County), Julia Huber Stone of Lebanon (Warren County), Stephanie Marie Kowal of Port Clinton (Ottawa County), Marisa R. Rohn of North Canton (Stark County), Joseph Ray French of Canton (Stark County) and Melinda Kowalski of Grandview Heights (Franklin County) to the Early Childhood Advisory Council for terms beginning Dec. 7, 2022 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- James Joseph Mermis of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) to the State Board of Education for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2023 and ending Dec. 31, 2026.
- Paul Edward LaRue of Washington Court House (Fayette County), Mark Alan Lamoucha of Leetonia (Columbiana County) and Walter R. Davis of Lebanon (Warren County) reappointed to the State Board of Education for terms beginning Jan. 1, 2023 and ending Dec. 31, 2026.



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- Lee Emery Czerwonka of Blue Ash (Hamilton County) reappointed to the Statewide Emergency Services Internet Protocol Network Steering Committee for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2023 and ending Dec. 31, 2026.
- Meredith L. Reffey of Delaware (Delaware County) to the Governor's Executive Workforce Board for a term beginning Dec. 1, 2022 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Denise Kay Evans of Lebanon (Warren County), David E. Prentice of Akron (Summit County) and R. Sean Grayson of Powell (Delaware County) to the Industrial Commission Nominating Council for terms beginning Dec. 7, 2022 and ending Oct. 20, 2026.
- Robert K. Schmitz of Bexley (Franklin County) reappointed to the Industrial Commission Nominating Council for a term beginning Dec. 7, 2022 and ending Oct. 20, 2024.
- Paul William Yost of Portsmouth (Scioto County) to the Third Frontier Commission for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2023 and ending April 1, 2024.
- Janet E. Foley Orosz of Powell (Delaware County) and Stephanie Elise Green of Dublin (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Fair Plan Underwriting Association Board of Governors for terms beginning Dec. 7, 2022 and ending Sept. 18, 2024.
- Sandra Jane Vorhies of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship Board for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2023 and ending Dec. 31, 2026.
- Luke Adam Russell of South Charleston (Clark County), Frances Renee Gerbig of Newark (Licking County), Tony Edward Coder Jr. of Mount Gilead (Morrow County), Ryane K. Sickles of Cincinnati (Hamilton County), Dana Sue Vallangeon of Columbus (Franklin County) and Alicia D. Smith of Columbus (Franklin County) to the RecoveryOhio Advisory Council for terms beginning Dec. 7, 2022 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.

## GREAT LAKES

While there has been progress to restore and protect the Great Lakes in recent years, including the reduction of toxic chemicals, there are still significant challenges to further improvements to the Great Lakes, especially for Lake Erie, according to the State of the Great Lakes 2022 report. The report is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the government of Canada in accordance with the 2012 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. The report uses nine indicators of ecosystem health, such as drinking water, fish consumption, and beach closures, to assess the Great Lakes. It



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describes these indicators in two ways: their current status, which is described in terms of good, fair or poor, and the trends over time, which are described as improving, unchanging, or deteriorating and are generally assessed over a 10-year period. Overall, the report says the status of the Great Lakes, which provide drinking water to roughly 28 million Americans and Canadians, is fair and its trend is unchanging. The report also assesses the state of each lake, finding that Lake Erie has the worst conditions.

### **GUNS**

Gun safety legislation SB357 (Dolan) will hopefully pass during the lame duck session, Senate Finance Committee Chair Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls) told *Hannah News* on Tuesday. "I'm trying to move it now. I've been meeting individually and collectively with caucus members, and they're providing some suggestions. We may be working on amendments to SB357, and we'll see what happens after that," Dolan said. During its third hearing on SB357, the Senate Finance Committee considered testimony from an interested party in the mental health field, a public safety opponent who believes the bill doesn't do enough to reduce gun violence, and several pro-gun opponents who said the bill infringes on Second Amendment rights.

### **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

With the passage of Sen. Kristina Roegner's (R-Hudson) SB3 last year, Ohio nurses will soon be able to opt for a multistate license (MSL) through the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC). Beginning on Jan. 1, 2023, registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs), and nursing students will be able to apply for an MSL, which will allow them to practice in the current 37 other states that have joined the Nurse Licensure Compact. The NLC provides consistent standards in every compact state, meaning nurses from across the country can more easily join Ohio's nursing workforce. By converting their existing Ohio license to an MSL, Ohio nurses can also provide care during a disaster or medical emergency in a nearby compact state or pursue opportunities in the telehealth field.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION**

The University of Cincinnati (UC) announced that Scott Satterfield will be its 43rd head football coach following the resignation of Luke Fickell, who left UC for the head coaching job at the University of Wisconsin. Satterfield holds a 76-48 record (.612) in 10 years as head coach at Louisville and Appalachian State, holding a winning mark in seven seasons in addition to a 4-1 record in bowl games. He led the Mountaineers to three straight conference titles and four bowl appearances from 2013 to 2018 before taking over the Cardinals in 2019.



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The Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine (BSOM) recently received approval from the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education to start the Rural Family Medicine Residency Program. The residency program's goal is to train family medicine physicians who will establish medical practices in rural Ohio, where health systems struggle to find enough physicians to meet the needs of their communities. The program is now accepting applications, and it will start its first cohort of three residents in 2023. It is supported by a \$750,000 grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The agency has awarded 59 of these grants since 2019, and Wright State is the only Ohio recipient.

Rep. Scott Lipps (R-Franklin) presented sponsor testimony Tuesday on his HB747 to prevent colleges and universities from "discriminating" against individuals who have not received the COVID-19 vaccine. The meeting was the last of the House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee in this General Assembly, according to Chair Tom Young's (R-Centerville) office. The bill applies only to the COVID-19 vaccine and affects only private colleges and state institutions of higher education. Lipps, the chair of the House Health Committee, said the bill is not meant to "call into question" the efficacy of the COVID19 vaccine, but to "affirm that medical choices should remain at the sole discretion of the individual."

### **HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS**

Sen. Louis Blessing III (R-Cincinnati) said in sponsor testimony to the Senate General Government Budget Committee Tuesday that his SB334 is part of a broader effort against "institutional housing" investors. The bill is modeled after a California law which he said was "a reaction to institutional housing investors scooping up houses by the truckload through the foreclosure auction process in the aftermath of the Great Recession," as those houses were being turned into "permanent rentals." The foreclosure auction bidding process currently has the highest bidder win the property, but Blessing said the bill would involve the winner's declaring in an affidavit under penalty of perjury that they intend to be an owner-occupant. Housing investors would be able to win the property if there are no successful prospective owner-occupants, tenant buyers or other eligible bidders. Determining who wins could take "anywhere from 15 to 45 days," according to Blessing.

### **INAUGURATION**

Gov. Mike DeWine's re-election campaign Wednesday announced a series of inaugural events occurring from Friday, Jan. 6 through Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, including a private-swearing in ceremony at the governor's residence on Sunday, Jan. 8 and culminating in the inauguration ceremony scheduled for noon at the Statehouse on Monday, Jan. 9. All of the events will require a ticket upon entrance, unless noted, the campaign said. Beyond



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the swearing in and inauguration ceremony, events include the Friday, Jan. 6 “Celebration of Ohio's Future Leaders and Innovators” hosted by Lt. Gov. Jon Husted from 6-9 p.m. at Lower.com Field; the Saturday, Jan. 7 “Governor's Inaugural Gala” from 7-11 p.m. at the Ohio Statehouse; and the Sunday, Jan. 8 “Science, Discovery & Family Fun” hosted by Ohio's First Lady Fran DeWine from 12:30-4 p.m. at COSI. More information is available at [www.DeWineHustedInauguration.com](http://www.DeWineHustedInauguration.com).

### INSURANCE

Ohio Department of Insurance (ODI) Director Judith French said in a recent ODI monthly review that insurance fraud is one of the “costliest” forms of fraud in the U.S. and worldwide, citing a report from the Coalition Against Insurance Fraud. There is a \$308.6 billion annual cost to U.S. consumers and businesses due to insurance fraud, which equals around \$932 per American. In FY22, ODI received more than 7,433 allegations of insurance fraud and agent misconduct. French said those allegations led to ODI's opening 1,116 investigations, identifying 132 potential law violations and taking administrative and/or criminal action against 162 individuals.

### JUDICIAL

The Ohio History Connection (OHC) got the green light Wednesday to proceed with the appropriation of the Octagon Earthworks in order to nominate Newark's geometric mound-builder structures as a United Nations World Heritage site. The Ohio Supreme Court found the state agency had satisfied statutory requirements to obtain Moundbuilders Country Club's century-old lease interest in the 125-acre plot through eminent domain action.

Erie County leads in the latest awards for attorney theft from the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection. Its Board of Commissioners announced \$124,336 in restitution to 11 victims of attorneys who did not perform agreed services or misappropriated client funds. The board is reimbursing a former client of the late Henry William Kishman of Erie County \$87,979 in missing funds he had agreed to invest for the client. Kishman died on Sept. 30, 2021. “Ohio has over 45,000 attorneys engaged in the active practice of law. Less than 1 percent are involved in claims reimbursed by the fund,” the board emphasized.

### LIBRARIES

Arts Midwest, a Minnesota-based organization that supports creative organizations in the region, is taking applications for 2023-2024 National Endowment for the Arts Big Read Program grants. The grants of up to \$20,000 support community-wide reading programs focused on one of 15 available books. Schools, institutions of higher education, libraries





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and other organizations are eligible to apply. Intent to apply notices are due by Wednesday, Jan. 18. Applications will be taken through Wednesday, Jan. 25. Application information is available at <https://tinyurl.com/3jpcjeyu>.

### **MENTAL HEALTH**

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) announced Wednesday that all six regional psychiatric hospitals operated by the state have earned the Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval for Hospital Accreditation by demonstrating continuous compliance with its performance standards. The Gold Seal is a symbol of quality that reflects a health care organization's commitment to providing safe and quality patient care. According to the department, the six state hospitals -- which include Appalachian Behavioral Healthcare in Athens; Heartland Behavioral Healthcare in Massillon; Northcoast Behavioral Healthcare in Northfield; Northwest Ohio Psychiatric Hospital in Toledo; Summit Behavioral Healthcare in Cincinnati; and Twin Valley Behavioral Healthcare in Columbus -- "underwent rigorous, unannounced onsite surveys during the past year. During each visit, a team of Joint Commission reviewers evaluated compliance with quality standards spanning several areas including, but not limited to environment of care, leadership, medication management, patient rights, and infection prevention and control."

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The state will put up \$25 million in lawsuit settlement proceeds toward removal of the Cuyahoga River Gorge Dam as a water quality and recreation project, the DeWine administration said Friday. The federal and state Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), cities of Akron and Cuyahoga Falls, Summit Metro Parks, Summit County and other organizations have been pursuing removal of the dam, which was used for hydroelectric generation from 1913 into the 1950s. The power station was demolished more than a decade ago and the dam "has no necessary use today," states the governor's office. The project will remove 900,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment, restore fish and wildlife habitat and open more of the river to recreational uses. It could also help in the future de-listing of the Cuyahoga River as a federal environmental "area of concern," the administration said.

Fayetteville Elementary School was recently dedicated as an official WILD School Site, the 200th site in Ohio and first in Brown County, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife. Projects implemented at Fayetteville Elementary Learning Garden include space for pollinators, a rain barrel, a composting bin, and native tree plantings. The primary purpose of the projects is to teach students about the natural world with the use of a specially designed curriculum.



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In the first survey of its kind in more than 30 years, the ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves (DNAP) Scenic Rivers Program announced it discovered two federally endangered mussel species in the Olentangy State Scenic River. The survey, funded by the Scenic Rivers Program, was conducted this summer. "It's exciting when we find wildlife in our Ohio waterways that we thought were gone, especially considering the decline of the freshwater mussels," ODNR Director Mary Mertz said in a statement. "These surveys and discoveries like this help us take the necessary steps to protect these species and their habitats."

ODNR will grant \$17 million to eliminate hazards left behind by historical mining activity and/or improve areas with abandoned mine lands across Appalachian Ohio. Pending federal approval for the recommended Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization Program (AMLER) projects, the Division of Mineral Resources Management (MRM) will fund six projects in six counties.

### PEOPLE

Ohio Excels announced recently that Cassandra Palsgrove has joined the nonprofit as its new K-12 education policy director. Formerly the director of the Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) Office of Graduate Success, Palsgrove will serve at Ohio Excels in a newly created position where she will help lead its public policy development, state advocacy and research efforts at the intersection of education and workforce development with the goal of improving educational outcomes for all K-12 Ohio students.

Paul Werth Associates announced recently that Jason Knox was joining the communication firm's public affairs team as vice president of federal and state public affairs, after more than 10 years on the Central Ohio staff of U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH). Knox's most recent role was Central Ohio district director, and he brings "an extensive network of government, business and civic contacts," according to the agency.

### POLITICS

Former Ohio Gov. John Kasich sent a letter to supporters Monday giving his thoughts on the most recent election which saw Republicans winning a narrow majority in the U.S. House but not retaking the U.S. Senate, saying Republicans need to offer more than just opposition to President Joe Biden's agenda. Saying he feels the same way he has felt for a long time now, Kasich argued the country "would be better served if our leaders looked for ways to work together rather than seeking ways to tear each other down. It's pretty simple if you think about it, but it's so rare these days that I feel many have given up hope that it's even possible." He said Republicans largely decided to oppose Biden and his agenda without providing any meaningful agenda and ideas to do something different.



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### **POLLS/STUDIES**

Policy Matters Ohio, a left-leaning think tank, recently released the results of a poll it commissioned earlier this year of likely Ohio voters that it said shows Ohioans support policies including increasing taxes on wealthy Ohioans and corporations, increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and enacting a child tax credit. Tenneth Fairclough, a polling analyst for the polling firm Data for Progress, said the results show support for policies that will really matter for Ohioans. With the Ohio General Assembly's eliminating the top tax bracket as part of budget bill HB110 (Oelslager), the groups asked poll respondents about support for creating a new tax bracket for those making over \$250,000 and another bracket that increases tax rates on those making over \$500,000. Among all likely voters, 71 percent strongly or somewhat support the new bracket, while 24 percent oppose. Those numbers include 78 percent of urban voters in support, 68 percent of suburban voters, and 59 percent of rural voters. The poll also asked if voters would support a state corporate income tax, finding 54 percent strongly supporting or somewhat supporting and 37 percent opposed. Support included 61 percent of urban voters, 52 percent of suburban voters, and 51 percent of rural voters.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced Monday that it is extending the deadline to comply with REAL ID requirements out two more years to May 7, 2025. DHS said the delay will give states additional time to ensure their residents have driver's licenses and identification cards that meet the security standards established by the REAL ID Act. As required by the law, following the enforcement deadline, federal agencies, including the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), will be prohibited from accepting driver's licenses and identification cards that do not meet these federal standards. DHS said the extension was necessary, in part, to address the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ability to obtain a REAL ID driver's license or identification card. REAL ID progress over the past two years has been significantly hindered by state driver's licensing agencies' having to work through the backlogs created by the pandemic, DHS said. Many of these agencies took various steps in response to the pandemic including automatically extending the expiration dates of driver's licenses and identification cards and shifting operations to appointment only.

### **STATE GOVERNMENT**

Gov. Mike DeWine will nominate Andy Wilson as the next director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS), the governor's office announced Thursday. Wilson is currently the governor's senior adviser for criminal justice policy. Pending Senate confirmation, he will replace ODPS Director Tom Stickrath, who is retiring at the end of the year. "Andy Wilson has been an invaluable asset to Ohio prosecutors and law



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enforcement throughout his distinguished career in public service," DeWine said in a news release. "Andy has been a trusted adviser on criminal justice issues, and I look forward to him serving as director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety."

Replacing deteriorating facilities, adding more green pathways, addressing parking concerns and enhancing the role of the Ohio History Connection are among the key provisions of the Ohio State Fair "master plan" framework presented to the Ohio Expositions Commission on Thursday. Gov. Mike DeWine was on hand for the meeting at Kasich Hall on the state fairgrounds, where Wellogy Principal Julie Delos Santos and EDGE Landscape Architecture Principal Tim Skinner conducted a presentation on how to improve the state fair. The master plan framework is the latest development in the work of the "Expo 2050" task force, which DeWine announced in July 2019. The task force is co-chaired by former Rep. Mike Curtin (D-Columbus) and Ohio Department of Development Director Lydia Mihalik. During his remarks ahead of the master plan presentation, DeWine said he expects the framework to move the conversation forward.

### UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

The Ohio Supreme Court should modify its opinion in *Bowling v. DeWine* to "leave no doubt" that the 10th District Court of Appeals' opinion in the case has been vacated, Attorney General Dave Yost said in a recently-filed motion. "In line with the usual practice in moot appeals, the governor and the director [of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS)] move to add the following language to the opinion: 'The 10th District's judgment is vacated and the case is remanded with instructions to dismiss the case as moot,'" the motion says. On Nov. 22, the Ohio Supreme Court dismissed as moot the state's appeal of the 10th District Court of Appeals' decision on whether the governor had the authority to block Ohioans from receiving payments under the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program. The unanimous Supreme Court did not explain its reasoning for declaring the appeal moot. Former Attorney General Marc Dann, who brought the challenge, on Friday filed a motion opposing the state's motion for reconsideration.

The state of Ohio is one of the lowest-ranked states for new unemployment claims, according to financial advisory website WalletHub. Ohio ranked 49 in states where jobless claims decreased the most week-over-week, with "1" being the best and "51" being the worst. South Dakota ranked 1, while Connecticut ranked 51. West Virginia ranked the highest among Ohio's neighbors at 16, followed by Kentucky (26), Michigan (27), Indiana (41) and Pennsylvania (44). Ohio ranked 43 in jobless claims per 100,000 people in the labor force, with "1" having the fewest claims and "51" having the most claims. Virginia ranked 1, while Alaska ranked 51. Kentucky was 16, followed by West Virginia (24), Indiana (27), Michigan (35) and Pennsylvania (42). "The U.S. has reduced unemployment from record highs during the COVID-19 pandemic to near record lows.



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Now, however, high inflation and the looming threat of a recession could cause unemployment claims to spike once more. For the time being, the job market is still in good shape, with new unemployment claims decreased by 6.6 percent week-over-week," WalletHub said.