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**Emergency Management Association of Ohio
Legislative Update**

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- HB33** **FY24-25 OPERATING BUDGET (EDWARDS J)** To make operating appropriations for the biennium beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2025, to levy taxes, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of state programs.
Current Status: 1/24/2024 - Consideration of Governor's Veto; Senate Overrides Veto, Vote 24-8
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA135-HB-33>
- HB77** **DRONE OPERATION REQUIREMENTS, PROHIBITIONS (WILLIS B)** To establish requirements and prohibitions governing the operation of unmanned aerial vehicles in Ohio.
Current Status: 6/12/2024 - Senate Transportation, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA135-HB-77>
- HB94** **RETIREMENT SERVICE CREDIT (CLICK G, WILLIS B)** Regarding transfers or purchases of certain retirement service credit.
Current Status: 10/3/2023 - House Pensions, (Third Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA135-HB-94>
- HB149** **DRONE SURVEILLANCE REQUIREMENTS (WILLIS B)** To establish requirements related to the use of an uncrewed aerial vehicle for surveillance.
Current Status: 6/11/2024 - **REPORTED OUT**, House Aviation and Aerospace, (Fourth Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA135-HB-149>
- HB266** **EVACUATION PLANS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (WIGGAM S)** To require school districts and schools to update emergency management plans to include evacuation procedures for individuals with disabilities and to amend the version of section 3314.03 of the Revised Code that is scheduled to take effect Jan. 1, 2025, to continue the changes on and after that effective date.
Current Status: 12/12/2023 - House Primary and Secondary Education, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA135-HB-266>
- SB50** **911 SERVICE LAW CHANGES (WILSON S, SMITH K)** To make changes to the law governing 9-1-1 service and to repeal program requirements for emergency-service-



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telecommunicator training.

Current Status: 6/6/2023 - **REPORTED OUT**, Senate Financial Institutions and Technology, (Eighth Hearing)

State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA135-SB-50>

Friday, Oct. 4, 2024

ABORTION

The number of out-of-state patients traveling to Ohio to obtain an abortion increased from 1,287 in 2022 to 2,771 in 2023 -- a 115.3 percent increase -- according to the Ohio Department of Health's (ODH) annual abortion report. The number of Ohio patients receiving abortions increased from 17,201 in 2022 to 19,229 in 2023, an 11.8 percent increase. Overall, the number of abortions increased from 18,488 in 2022 to 22,000 in 2023, a 19 percent increase. This is the first ODH abortion report since Ohio voters approved reproductive/abortion rights amendment Issue 1 in November 2023.

AGRICULTURE

The completion of one longer-term wetlands restoration project and another short-term river cleanup project in a separate part of the state were announced recently as part of Gov. Mike DeWine's H2Ohio project to address complex issues around water quality in the state. Near Lima, the Baughman H2Ohio Wetland Restoration Project restored 19 acres of wetlands to filter sediments and nutrients from the surrounding water before it flows into the Maumee River Watershed, where such sediment loads have contributed to harmful algal blooms in the Western Lake Erie Basin. The second project recently helped clean up an area of the Scioto River below the Frank-Refugee Expressway (OH-104 bridge) in Columbus. Nearly 20 individuals from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the city of Columbus used canoes to collect litter along the shoreline. A larger piece of ODOT equipment was used to lift larger items out of the river. The cleanup collected thousands of single-use items, as well as several coolers and a loveseat.

AMERICA 250-OHIO

The America250-Ohio Commission announced Thursday its next major initiative for observing the 250th anniversary of the United States' founding and Ohio's place in that historical event, revealing plans to host picnics throughout July 2026 and facilitate Ohioans' planning of their own celebration picnics. Ohio's Homecoming & Picnic, the official name for the event, will help to ensure every part of Ohio can participate in



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celebrations and observances of the semiquincentennial, said Megan Wood, executive director and CEO for the Ohio History Connection (OHC) and project lead for the latest initiative.

ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Ohio was recently named the 15th "most fun" state in the U.S. by personal finance website WalletHub, putting it second among neighbors behind Pennsylvania which was 13th. Michigan was 22nd, followed by Indiana, 40th; Kentucky, 42nd; and West Virginia, 50th. The top five states were Florida, California, Nevada, New York and Colorado. The five lowest states were Arkansas, Rhode Island, Delaware, Mississippi and West Virginia. WalletHub also listed two subrankings as part of the report, with Ohio 16th nationally and second among neighbors for nightlife and 17th nationally and first among neighbors in entertainment and recreation.

BALLOT ISSUES

The Ohio Organizing Collaborative this week released an open letter signed by more than five dozen Black faith leaders urging voters to approve redistricting amendment Issue 1. "Historically, gerrymandering has been used as a weapon to disenfranchise communities of color, diluting our voices and diminishing our representation in government. This manipulation of voting districts has allowed politicians to choose their voters rather than voters choosing their representatives. These nefarious practices undermine the very foundation of our democracy and perpetuate systemic inequalities," the letter stated.

Former Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor is featured in a new advertisement launched by pro-Issue 1 group Citizens Not Politicians. O'Connor, who helped author provisions of the redistricting amendment and has been campaigning for it, speaks in the ad about her role on the Supreme Court that repeatedly struck down General Assembly and congressional maps, finding them unconstitutional.

FY24-25 BUDGET

The Federal Reserve for the first time in four years cut the interest rate by 0.5 percentage points last month, which could not only stimulate the broader economy but also affect state budgets going forward, including Ohio's. Office of Budget and Management (OBM) Director Kim Murnieks, in an interview with *Hannah News*, said the rate cut will have an effect on Ohio's state budget in two major ways. On the plus side, the interest rates it pays on its bonds will be less, but on the negative, the interest that the state earns on its funds in the state treasury will be less. "The state really did manage through the recent high-interest rate environment fairly well, and as a result, achieved very positive returns for taxpayers," Murnieks said. She pointed to moves such as the DeWine administration's



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working with state lawmakers to use cash instead of bonds in the capital budget as state revenues came in higher than projected. That helped save taxpayers \$1.3 billion in interest costs, she said.

BUSINESS/CORPORATE

Illinois-based auto parts maker Navistar, which has an assembly plant in Springfield, recently announced it has changed its name to International Motors, LLC effective Oct. 1. The change is part of a rebranding effort to make the company a "solutions provider," the company said. "The return to International is an acknowledgement of our rich heritage as much as it is an investment in our promising future," said International President and CEO Mathias Carlbaum. The company is a successor to International Harvester.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

Financial insecurity and living in communities without adequate support can result in poor health outcomes for Ohio families across generations. A wide-ranging report released this summer by the Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO) looked at how positive community conditions can support both financial and health security, programs that are currently working to promote generational financial prosperity in Ohio, and what policy steps in Ohio can be taken to improve health outcomes through financial security. The HPIO report lists positive community conditions including high-quality education, employment opportunities and safe, stable and affordable housing as supportive of both health and financial security for Ohioans. The report points to Ohio Department of Health data that shows that as Ohioans' household income decreases, their prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) increases.

ECONOMY

Ohio's minimum wage will increase from \$10.45 to \$10.70 for non-tipped employees and from \$5.25 to \$5.35 for tipped employees in the new year, the Ohio Department of Commerce said Monday. Under a constitutional amendment passed by Ohio voters in 2006, the minimum wage increases annually in line with growth in the Consumer Price Index for urban wage earners (CPI-W), which increased by 2.4 percent from September 2023 through August 2024. Employees at smaller companies, those with gross receipts of \$394,000 or less per year starting in January, will still be paid at the federal minimum wage of \$7.25, as will 14- and 15-year-old workers. The threshold for gross receipts increases yearly in line with inflation.

EDUCATION



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At least several and potentially more than half of seats on the State Board of Education could turn over next year as voters face a crop of candidates for six positions and terms for at-large seats expire at year's end. Ohio voters will choose new board members in Districts 1, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11 in November. An incumbent in another seat is running mid-term for the General Assembly, potentially creating another opening. One of four at-large seats will definitely get a new occupant in the coming year because of term limits. Gov. Mike DeWine appoints members to the board's eight at-large seats, half of which come up for appointment every two years. Board seats are technically nonpartisan, but candidates often identify with major parties and carry their endorsements. The Ohio Democratic Party endorsed in some races. The Ohio Republican Party did not respond to messages about whether it plans to endorse in board races. Ohio's teacher unions endorse in the races as well.

The DeWine administration said Thursday it's pledging to cut the rate of chronic absence among Ohio students in half over the next five years. The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) announced the effort, and Gov. Mike DeWine elaborated on it Thursday while speaking after an America250-Ohio event. Asked what he can do about the absenteeism rate, the governor said, "It's a problem, and I think making people aware of the problem is the first step. I think starting off with that and getting an understanding of what happens when a student does not go to school very often is really the first step," DeWine said.

Attorney General Dave Yost is trying to sidestep "comprehensive and complete administrative procedures" that lawmakers enacted to resolve the types of busing disputes now before the Ohio Supreme Court, Columbus City Schools told justices in a filing Monday that requests dismissal of Yost's lawsuit. Yost sued the district recently over its decision to deem transportation "impractical" for large numbers of charter and private school students, and last week he filed an emergency motion saying Columbus should be compelled to at least provide transportation to families who have requested mediation with the district over the loss of busing. Justices responded by ordering Columbus to file an answer to his motion by today, Monday.

Current high school juniors and seniors are invited to apply to explore career opportunities within the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) later this fall. Applications are now open to take part in ODNR's job shadow day on Friday, Nov. 22. ODNR's job shadow program sheds light on various divisions throughout the department, including law enforcement, information technology, natural resource protection, environmental sciences, business and administration and engineering. Students will select from a variety of job shadow opportunities and then be assigned to one of ODNR's divisions for the day. More information about ODNR's divisions can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/3wmsmmwf>.



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The DeWine administration announced recently that 34 schools will receive funding under the second round of the Career Technical Education Equipment Grant Program, giving career tech education access to 6,330 additional students around the state. Schools receiving the funds can use them on equipment upgrades to teach students the skills businesses need in their workforce. They support in-demand programs including engineering, manufacturing and construction. "Investing in our schools and making sure they have updated equipment for training is an investment into our students' futures," Gov. Mike DeWine said. "Providing the opportunity for more schools to purchase equipment so they can train additional students will set them -- and our state -- up for success."

ELECTIONS 2024

Former Gov. John Kasich on social media Wednesday said he will not vote for former President Donald Trump in the upcoming election. Kasich wrote on Twitter/X, "Some people think that I hate Trump. I don't. I simply don't think America's president should be a person who fuels grievances to divide us and doesn't have a hopeful vision for our future." He continued, "I'm a lifelong conservative Republican, but I will not be voting for Donald Trump."

Tuesday, Oct. 8 is the first day for mail in and in-person absentee voting, following the close of voter registration on Monday, Oct. 7. "Bipartisan election officials across Ohio made a commitment to ensure we're fully prepared for this high-profile election. With one week until the start of early voting, I can confidently say that we are prepared for voters to begin heading to their early voting centers and begin receiving their requested absentee ballots," said Secretary of State Frank LaRose. "Tedious preparation is the key to executing any successful election, and Ohioans can have confidence that no matter which of Ohio's three convenient methods of voting they choose, their vote will be secure." For Ohioans who requested absentee ballots, local boards of elections will begin mailing ballots on Tuesday, Oct. 8.

A Bowling Green State University (BGSU) poll conducted in September found U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) remains in a tight race with Republican challenger Bernie Moreno and that Issue 1 had 60 percent support, though awareness of it was rather limited. In the U.S. presidential race, former President Donald Trump led Vice President Kamala Harris with 51 percent compared to 44 percent. In the U.S. Senate race, Brown led with 49 percent compared to Moreno's 45 percent. Analysis by BGSU officials noted Brown has won his three previous campaigns by at least 6 points and said he was the only public figure with a net positive favorability rating (+1) among respondents while Moreno had the lowest at -14. However, nearly one in five had neither a favorable or unfavorable view of Moreno.



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Regarding Issue 1, 60 percent of respondents said they plan to vote in favor, 20 percent plan to vote no and 20 percent were unsure. The poll found support along party lines included 82 percent of Democrats, 41 percent of Republicans and 57 percent of independent voters. Fifty-one percent of respondents said they had heard "a little" about the issue; 28 percent said they had heard nothing; and 22 percent had heard a lot.

Saying that Secretary of State Frank LaRose has "taken it upon himself to instead attempt to rewrite the statute governing return of absentee ballots," in response to a court ruling, the Ohio Democratic Party Friday filed a lawsuit in the Ohio Supreme Court asking it to order LaRose to rescind his directive restricting the use of dropboxes to individuals returning their own personal ballot. LaRose issued the directive to county boards in September after a federal judge ruled that a provision of omnibus elections bill 134-HB458 (Hall) criminalizing knowingly returning another's absentee ballot unless authorized to do so violates Section 208 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA), which gives disabled voters the right to have assistance from "a person of the voter's choice." Under the directive, individuals delivering the ballot of a relative or a disabled voter are now required to enter the county board of elections office and complete an attestation form that they are complying with applicable laws.

Then, this week, the Ohio Democratic Party (ODP) filed a merit brief with the Ohio Supreme Court arguing its lawsuit against LaRose is a "straightforward matter of statutory interpretation" of whether LaRose has the authority to limit the use of dropboxes and impose an "attestation requirement that is not required by the Revised Code. Because the answer to both questions is 'no'," the Court should grant the relief sought in the lawsuit," the brief argues.

Hamilton County Common Pleas Court Judge Megan Shanahan launched the first commercial of her campaign for the Ohio Supreme Court. Shanahan is seeking to unseat current Justice Michael Donnelly, who is running for re-election. According to her campaign, the 30-second spot highlights Shanahan's experience as a former prosecutor and her more than a decade of experience as a municipal and common pleas court judge.

U.S. Sen. JD Vance (R-OH) and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz discussed a wide range of issues during the 2024 campaign's only vice presidential debate on Tuesday night, including immigration and the legal status of Haitians in Springfield. Walz said he expected to hear former President Donald Trump's rhetoric "dehumanizing" immigrants during the campaign, but was surprised to hear Vance similarly working to "demonize" those individuals, such as amplifying the baseless claim that Haitian immigrants were eating cats and dogs in Springfield. "Saying, 'I will create stories to bring attention to this' -- that vilified a large number of people who are here legally in the community of Springfield," Walz said. Walz pointed to Gov. Mike DeWine's repeated statements that those claims about Haitians are not true, noting that DeWine now has to spend time



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cleaning up the mess created by Trump and Vance. "There's consequences for this," Walz said. "The consequences in Springfield were, the governor had to send state law enforcement to escort kindergarteners to school."

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown's (D-OH) re-election campaign announced Wednesday that it has raised more than \$30.6 million in the third quarter. Tuesday, Oct. 15, is the deadline for federal candidates to report contributions and expenditures made in July, August and September. Brown's campaign said the report is another fundraising record for Ohio.

All three Republicans running for the Ohio Supreme Court outraised their Democratic opponents in September, and two of the three hold a money advantage. Thursday was the deadline for statewide candidates to report any fundraising and expenditures for the month of September.

The League of Conservation Voters (LCV) Victory Fund has launched a new ad against Republican nominee Derek Merrin as part of its \$14 million campaign in 16 U.S. House races across the country. LCV said its opposition broadcast ad criticizes Merrin by seeking him to tie him to the FirstEnergy scandal.

ENVIRONMENT

The Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (OAQDA) has closed on bond financing of nearly \$1.1 million to support the installation of a solar energy system at a Montgomery County company's facility. "RAM Precision Industries has been a vital part of the Dayton community for 50 years, and we are proud to support their investment in their facility including with cleaner energy improvements like solar," OAQDA Executive Director Christina O'Keeffe said.

GOVERNOR

Gov. Mike DeWine Thursday addressed a variety of topics while speaking to reporters. He said the House is planning to announce bipartisan legislation next week from Reps. Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton) and Dan Troy (D-Willowick) on reauthorizing constitutional borrowing authority for the Ohio Public Works Commission's State Capital Improvement Program (SCIP), which will need to be approved by voters to continue. DeWine said there's not yet agreement among lawmakers and the administration on when to go to the ballot and how much money to seek, but he's on board with the general proposition.

Appointments made over the week include the following:



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- Gregory A. White of Concord Township (Lake County) to the Kent State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending May 16, 2033.
- Abygail C. Deemer of Warren (Trumbull County) as a student member to the Kent State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending May 16, 2026.
- Rachel D. Cummings of Seaman (Adams County) and Jeffrey D. Newman of West Union (Adams County) reappointed to the Southern State Community College Board of Trustees for terms beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending May 11, 2030.
- Theodore M. Scherpenberg of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the Cincinnati State Technical and Community College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending Aug. 31, 2026.
- Rajbir S. Minhas of Cincinnati (Hamilton County), George H. Vincent of Cincinnati (Hamilton County), Manuel Chavez III of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) reappointed to the Cincinnati State Technical and Community College Board of Trustees for terms beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending Aug. 31, 2030.
- Joseph C. Lampton of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) as a student member to the University of Cincinnati Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending May 13, 2026.
- Rita N. A. Mansour of Toledo (Lucas County), Adam C. Shank of Powell (Delaware County) and William B. White of Marietta (Washington County) to the Ohio Arts Council for terms beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending July 1, 2029.
- Robin E. Judd of Bexley (Franklin County) reappointed to the Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission for a term beginning Oct. 15, 2024, and ending Oct. 14, 2027; Mark Swaim-Fox of Cleveland Heights (Cuyahoga County) reappointed for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending June 29, 2027; and Bradley G. Beach of North Canton (Stark County) reappointed for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending July 20, 2027.
- Meira F. Zucker of Sylvania (Lucas County) reappointed to the Broadcast Educational Media Commission for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending June 30, 2028.
- Brian M. Perera of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) reappointed to the Board of Trustees of the Martha Kinney Cooper Ohioana Library Association for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending Sept. 15, 2028.



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- John J. Bishop of Marco Island (Collier County, FL) and Thomas L. Williams of Naples (Collier County, FL) reappointed to the JobsOhio Board of Directors for terms beginning Aug. 23, 2024, and ending July 5, 2028.

- Melinda S. Haggerty of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) and Samantha Shafer of Lancaster (Fairfield County) reappointed to the Children's Trust Fund Board for terms beginning Sept. 16, 2024, and ending July 2, 2027.

- Wayne R. Wauligman of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the State Dental Board for a term beginning Aug. 23, 2024, and ending April 6, 2027, and Cathy L. Graves of Mason (Warren County) for a term beginning Aug. 23, 2024, and ending April 6, 2028.

- Leonard J. Hubert of Granville (Licking County) appointed to the State Board of Pharmacy for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending June 30, 2028; and Jeffrey L. Huston of Cedarville (Greene County) and Tod J. Grimm of North Royalton (Cuyahoga County) reappointed for terms beginning Sept. 4, 2024, and ending June 30, 2028.

- Jonathan A. Allison of Columbus (Franklin County) to the State Teachers Retirement System for a term beginning Sept. 28, 2024, and ending Sept. 27, 2028.

- Jennifer A. Wagner of Toledo (Lucas County) to the Board of Executives of Long-Term Services and Supports for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending May 27, 2027; and Debra K. Radecky of Hudson (Summit County) reappointed for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending May 27, 2027.

- Amy Sabath of Painesville (Lake County) appointed to the Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board for a term beginning Oct. 11, 2024, and ending Oct. 10, 2026; Ashley L. Skelly of Columbus (Franklin County) for a term beginning Oct. 11, 2024, and ending Oct. 10, 2027; Heather Katafiasz of Wadsworth (Medina County) reappointed for a term beginning Oct. 1, 2024, and ending Oct. 10, 2027; and Jerry R. Strausbaugh of Ashland (Ashland County) reappointed for a term beginning Oct. 11, 2024, and ending Oct. 10, 2027.

- Maria L. Haberman of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Public Benefits Advisory Board for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending June 30, 2027; Lilia J. Perez-Chavolla of Hilliard (Franklin County) reappointed for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending June 30, 2026; and Jock J. Pitts of Oxford (Butler County) and Dasmine L. Wright of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed for terms beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending June 30, 2027.

- Karl H. Schneider of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Board of Building Appeals for a term beginning Oct. 14, 2024, and ending Oct. 13, 2028.



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- Sue H. Farley of Glouster (Athens County) to the Reclamation Commission for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending June 28, 2029; and Edward C. Spiker of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2024, and ending June 28, 2029.

- Charles C. Chandler of Cardington (Morrow County), Robert F. Krapenc of Westerville (Franklin County) and Gwen HoweGebbers of Holgate (Henry County) reappointed to the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission for terms beginning Sept. 4, 2024, and ending Aug. 21, 2028.

GREAT LAKES

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) is now accepting applications for the Lake Erie Communities and Coastal Resilience Grant. Grants of up to \$150,000 will be considered for qualifying communities in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Erie, Lake, Lorain, Lucas, Ottawa and Sandusky counties. Applications will be accepted through Friday, Oct. 25. For more information, visit <https://lakeerie.ohio.gov/>.

HANNAH NEWS RACES TO WATCH

Rep. Andrea White (R-Kettering) is hoping to fend off a challenge from Democratic candidate Rose Lounsbury this fall to win a third term in the House. The reconfigured 36th House District still includes the cities of Kettering and Oakwood, but now contains more of the city of Dayton and all of the city of Riverside. "I represented parts of the community of Riverside in the past," White told *Hannah News*, noting she has also represented part of Dayton in both of her terms. "Now I have downtown, the historic districts, Old North Dayton ... and kind of the heart of the opiate epidemic, some of the hardest hit parts of East Dayton. For me, having represented many parts of Dayton, having spent a lot of time personally downtown and in the historic districts for decades, I'm very excited about the new parts of Dayton." Lounsbury, an author and "personal simplicity coach," told *Hannah News* that she wasn't very interested in politics for most of her life, although she has always been a regular voter since she became an adult. "I kind of operated under the assumption that whoever was in charge was probably doing a good job. ... That illusion started to shatter in the 2016 election when Donald Trump got elected, and I suddenly felt this fear that we could do what we were supposed to do, which was vote in our elections, and we could elect really bad people, people who I felt were truly rather dangerous. I felt this threat." Because her triplets were still very young and she was just starting her small business, she said she didn't decide to get involved in politics immediately. However, she eventually joined the League of Women Voters in 2020, and decided to get further involved after *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in 2022.



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With Rep. Casey Weinstein (D-Akron) running for the Senate, the 34th House District will have a new representative in the 136th General Assembly. Derrick Hall, a judge advocate general (JAG) officer in the U.S. Army Reserve, health care executive and former Akron Public Schools Board of Education president, is hoping to retain the seat for the Democrats in the race against Tallmadge City Council President Adam Bozic, who is also a small business owner and Marine Corps veteran. The district is in Summit County, and includes parts of Akron. Bozic told *Hannah News* that he is proud of his work on city council, and believes he could make a difference for his area in the Statehouse. "I enjoy helping my community, and making things better. If I can be a small part of that for my district and for the state, that's just even better," Bozic said. According to Hall's campaign website, his top priorities are education, redistricting reform, health care, reproductive rights, environmental issues, small business growth, senior services, new economic opportunities and military service.

This year's House District 11 race on Tuesday, Nov. 5 will not be the candidates' first encounter, as term-limited Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard) and Democrat Crystal Lett reprise their 2020 Senate nailbiter after both breezed through their respective primaries unopposed. The partisan toss-up in northwest Franklin County grows more interesting still: District 11 has an incumbent whom neither Kunze nor Lett will face. Rep. Anita Somani (D-Dublin) has been drawn into departing Rep. Beth Liston's (D-Dublin) District 8 as the latter runs for Kunze's expiring Senate District 16 seat. The veteran senator entered the General Assembly as a House representative for northwest Franklin in 2012 and seized the opportunity four years later to replace former Republican Sen. Jim Hughes. With a husband and two grown daughters of her own, Kunze has led a number of family related legislative efforts over the years and currently chairs the Senate Transportation Committee. Also a mom, wife and community leader, Lett credits her late brother's struggles and eventual suicide with her genuine empathy and commitment to practical solutions. Her childhood experiences led to a political science degree from Ohio State University, a turn as a marketing professional, a case management career with youth facing severe mental illness, and she has a son with a serious genetic disorder, Prader-Willi syndrome.

JUDICIAL

Vouchers will not go on trial this year. Judge Jaiza Page of Franklin County Common Pleas Court is delaying litigation over Ohio's EdChoice program until an unspecified date in 2025, voiding plans to begin a trial Monday, Nov. 4, according to plaintiffs in the case. Meanwhile, the Ohio Supreme Court was not swayed by Senate President Matt Huffman's (R-Lima) argument that his constitutional legislative privilege is still under threat despite withdrawal of a subpoena seeking to have him questioned in the litigation. Justices granted Wednesday the motion to dismiss the case filed by the coalition of school districts challenging the constitutionality of school vouchers. A spokesman for



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plaintiffs said Page informed their attorneys of the delay Wednesday morning. The EdChoice lawsuit was launched nearly three years ago. The Vouchers Hurt Ohio coalition expressed no worry about the delay Wednesday.

LIQUOR/ALCOHOL

The Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) Division of Liquor Control (DOLC) and JobsOhio Beverage System (JOBS) received the 2024 "Overall Best Practices Award" from *StateWays* for their Ohio Liquor (OHLQ) partnership. "I could not be more proud of this extraordinary honor. This is a clear result of our unique partnership and the team that dedicates so much time and effort to its success," DOLC Superintendent Jackie DeGenova said. "OHLQ has had a very successful year thanks to collaboration, hard work, and a commitment to selling high-proof spirits fairly and responsibly," DeGenova said. "We will continue our work to be a national leader in our operations" DOLC's Licensing Section currently regulates approximately 27,000 private companies throughout the state that manufacture, distribute or sell alcoholic beverages. In addition, the division's Investigative Services Unit physically inspects all liquor permit applicants and licensed permit holders to ensure compliance with Ohio laws.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Friday, Gov. Mike DeWine authorized the use of the State Disaster Relief Program (SDRP) to support 11 Ohio counties that were significantly affected by severe weather this year. SDRP will reimburse counties for storm damage amounts that meet state requirements, but do not meet the threshold for federal assistance. The program is intended to assist local government and private nonprofit organizations with costs associated with debris removal, emergency protective measures and other permanent work. Areas to receive SDRP funding and dates of severe weather include the following:

- Monroe County: Flooding and severe storms on Jan. 24 and 25.
- Belmont, Guernsey, Jefferson, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble and Washington counties: Flooding and severe storms for April 1-4.
- Darke and Mercer counties: Tornadoes on May 7 and 8.
- Cuyahoga County: Tornadoes and severe storms on August 6.

Gov. DeWine activated elements of the Ohio National Guard to assist North Carolina Monday amid the damage caused by Hurricane Helene. They include a CH-47 helicopter and six soldiers from the 238th Aviation Regiment based in North Canton to help with



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aerial transport and 10 airmen from the 121st Air Refueling Wing's Homeland Response Forces who will support North Carolina first responders in fatality search and recovery.

Then on Tuesday DeWine deployed Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) personnel and equipment from the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to North Carolina as part of ongoing recovery assistance. Two DAS staff members will travel to Asheville, NC with an 80-foot Tower on Wheels (TOW), a cache of radios and a portable generator. The TOW is used to supplement coverage and/or add capacity to areas experiencing an emergency and can be made operational within an hour of its arrival. MARCS is the wireless digital communications network used by Ohio first responders across jurisdictions.

On Wednesday, the governor declared a state of emergency for four Southern Ohio counties following severe weather that hit the state on Friday as remnants of Hurricane Helene moved north. Affected counties in the emergency declaration are Lawrence, Jackson, Pike, and Scioto counties. Storms caused high winds, flooding, power outages, and downed trees affecting roadways and residences. "This declaration of a state of emergency will give the state the ability to expedite assistance to these communities," said DeWine.

Rains that blanketed Ohio over the weekend in the wake of Hurricane Helene eased drought conditions, according to the weekly update from "Drought Monitor." The amount of the state in at least "abnormally dry conditions" fell from nearly 98 percent to 86 percent in the latest update. About 14 percent of the state now shows no drought conditions, with most of that in counties in Northeastern Ohio. Portions of Preble, Montgomery, Darke, Miami, Brown, Adams, Scioto and Lawrence counties also show no drought conditions. In fact, Lawrence and Scioto counties are currently under an emergency declaration in part due to the flooding that has occurred there because of the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ohio boaters interested in some of the state's most sought-after boating destinations can now enter the lottery for a dock spot at one of 17 state parks during the 2025 season. "Our state parks offer some of the best boating opportunities in Ohio, and the boat dock lottery gives more people the chance to enjoy these beautiful waters," said Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Director Mary Mertz. "We're excited to offer this convenient online application process, making it easier than ever for boaters to access the outdoor adventures waiting for them next season." State parks in the boat dock lottery include the following: Alum Creek, Buck Creek, Buckeye Lake, Burr Oak, Caesar Creek, Delaware, Dillon, Guilford Lake, Indian Lake, Lake Milton, Mary Jane Thurston, Mosquito Lake, Paint Creek, Rocky Fork, Salt Fork, Shawnee, and West Branch. More information about



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state park boat docks and entry into the lottery is available at <https://tinyurl.com/ucnrh3z6>. The lottery application period closes at 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 31.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Isi Ikharebha Green doesn't want to worry about funding drying up from year to year for her nonprofit organization, Physicians CareConnection. "I want to be somebody's line item," Green told the Columbus Metropolitan Club during a forum Wednesday about how outdated funding models can affect the lives of Ohio's babies and birthing parents. Green was echoing Jill Miller, president and CEO of Bethesda Inc. and bi3, who said nonprofits need space and time to think differently and try new things before philanthropic funders stop funding an organization short of its mission being reached. Green likened a nonprofit's constant search for funding to if a fire department or police station had to write grant applications every year. Green also said worrying about an organization's staffing, payroll and other administration can distract its leadership from focusing on the organization's goals, like lowering infant mortality rates.

OHIO HISTORY

All during the month of October a photo exhibit will be on display in the lobby of the James A. Rhodes State Office Tower marking the building's 50th anniversary. Photos include before and after photos of the Columbus skyline and images of the tower's construction as well as early tenants working on what were then state-of-the-art typewriters and large desktop computer systems. The exhibit also highlights the recent Ohio Department of Administrative Services Modernization Project, which saw the replacement of 3,234 windows and 271,840-square feet of granite panels. According to DAS, the building stands 629 feet with 41 floors. It is the fifth tallest building in Ohio and the tallest building in Columbus and state government. Construction of the building was officially announced on Dec. 3, 1969 to consolidate state offices and departments into one building and give more space to legislative offices in the Ohio Statehouse.

Centuries before Europeans navigated the Atlantic Ocean toward the North American east coast, the oldest inhabited civilizations in North America thrived in communities in Arizona and New Mexico in the American Southwest. Fort Duquesne near Pittsburgh was originally built by French forces in North America as a barrier between the settlers in eastern America and the native populations in the middle of the continent. Even the name of Ohio's recently christened UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, reflects the name of the White farmer who owned the land in the 1800s where the earthworks were found, rather than the name the indigenous people who built the earthworks centuries before called themselves. While author and Yale University professor of history and American studies Ned Blackhawk says that academics of early



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American studies do normally call the culture of people who lived in the area "Hopewellian," overall American history is in the process of being rediscovered. Blackhawk spoke to the Cleveland City Club on Friday about his new book, *The Rediscovery of America: Native People and the Unmasking of U.S. History*, which is about his research into what he calls the "calcified" knowledge of the history many Americans have about their country.

PARKS/RECREATION

A special event hike to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Hocking Hills State Park will serve as the capstone of Ohio's 2024 fall hiking season. "This 100th anniversary truly is a celebration for all of Ohio," said Gov. Mike DeWine. "Hocking Hills is well loved by Ohioans and is getting the world-wide recognition it deserves as a fantastic hiking destination with unparalleled natural wonders for all visitors to enjoy. We welcome everyone to take advantage of this beautiful state park and experience the Heart of Adventure, right here in Ohio." On Saturday, Oct. 12, visitors are invited to the Old Man's Cave Visitor Center at 19988 OH-664 Scenic near Logan for a challenging 4.5-mile hike to commemorate the state of Ohio's purchase in 1924 of 146 acres of land in Hocking County that would become Hocking Hills State Park. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) has also published a complete list of other guided and self-led fall hikes scheduled through the end of November at state parks throughout Ohio at <https://tinyurl.com/4b2stwzx>.

PENSIONS

Lynn Hoover would have retired from the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) in less than a year but instead put in her required two-months' notice after a no-confidence vote against her and senior staff narrowly failed at the most recent board meeting. STRS on Friday provided to *Hannah News* the message Hoover sent to the board Wednesday announcing her retirement plans, along with one from Matt Worley, the chief investment officer, who will retire in the spring. Hoover wrote she planned to inform STRS staff Friday and asked that board members keep the plans confidential until then. Instead, they leaked it to the press Thursday morning. *Hannah News* independently confirmed the plans Thursday afternoon.

PEOPLE

Shawn Smith, executive director of the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA), will be transitioning to a yet-undefined role, agency spokesperson Penny Martin said in an email.

POVERTY



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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) this week rolled out changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that aim to address the benefits cliff by allowing people to receive a reduced allotment once their income exceeds the eligibility threshold of 130 percent of the federal poverty level, FPL. ODJFS added tiered eligibility for those earning above 130 percent of FPL, with gradually decreasing benefit amounts up to 200 percent of FPL. "Fear of losing food benefits can be a deterrent to taking a new job, working more hours, or even accepting a promotion," ODJFS Director Matt Damschroder said in a statement. "Instead of an all-or-nothing approach, we are creating a sliding scale that encourages people to earn more by slowly reducing their benefits as their income grows. This provides an incentive to accept promotions and pay raises knowing they won't immediately lose benefits."

PUBLIC SAFETY

In addition to the burn bans that the Ohio State Fire Marshal (SFM) issued last week, the months of October and November are now also under annual restrictions for burning in unincorporated areas during daytime hours. Prior to the past week's rains in Ohio associated with Hurricane Helene, the SFM had expanded the burn ban from early September to even more of Ohio's counties. The counties included in that burn ban included the following: Adams, Athens, Belmont, Brown, Butler, Carroll, Champaign, Clark, Clermont, Clinton, Coshocton, Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Gallia, Greene, Guernsey, Hamilton, Harrison, Highland, Hocking, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Licking, Logan, Madison, Meigs, Miami, Monroe, Montgomery, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pickaway, Pike, Ross, Tuscarawas, Union, Vinton, Warren, and Washington counties. As of Oct. 1, the Ohio law also bans outdoor burning in unincorporated areas from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. until the end of November. This annual statewide rule does not supersede any county's other burning restrictions, specifically in the counties listed above. The regular annual rule coincides with the abundance of dry grass, weeds and leaves on the ground during the fall season.

SPRINGFIELD

Gov. Mike DeWine and Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) Director Stephen D. Dackin Monday announced schools in several communities, including Springfield, will share in \$1.5 million in grant funding to address challenges from a significant increase in Haitian migrants over the past several years. Funding going to Springfield schools includes \$1.346 million to Springfield City Schools; \$12,000 to Springfield Preparatory and Fitness Academy; and \$12,000 to Springfield Sports Academy. The governor's office said funds will be used to improve essential learning programs for all students in the community and to provide additional resources to support educational needs, including translation technologies, interpreters, mental health services, and more.



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STATE GOVERNMENT

The Controlling Board Monday approved nearly \$16 million in increased appropriation authority for the Ohio Attorney General's (AG) Office, as well as funds for housing and broadband in the state. Additionally, the board heard an update on a tentative collective bargaining agreement between the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 1199 and the state. All of the items on Monday's agenda were approved without objection except for a request from the Ohio Department of Development for the Rural Industrial Park Loan program and a request from the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) for a contract with the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) of Arlington, VA, for sessions with local health departments. Additionally, the board approved three late additions involving requests from the Ohio History Connection and the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission that Controlling Board President Jill Schuler said were submitted timely by the agencies but were left off the agenda in error.

TECHNOLOGY/AEROSPACE

Lt. Gov. Jon Husted joined business leaders Wednesday at the Ohio Chamber of Commerce's "Future Forum" in discussing how the past can inform planning for what is to come. Husted called history "a great teacher" and said that technology and innovation are "inevitable" parts of the future, which is difficult to predict. Instead, the key is to be willing to change with what comes next, he continued. Husted also detailed how innovation determines which nations succeed at an economic and military level and discussed disruptive inventions such as the steam engine and light bulb.

TOBACCO/SMOKING/VAPING

Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of death and disability in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) say that over 16 million Americans have at least one disease caused by smoking, and in total that amounts to \$170 billion in direct medical costs attributable to smoking. The number of deaths in Ohio caused by smoking remains three times higher than the number of deaths in the state due to drug overdoses, according to the CDC, and Ohio has the fourth-highest rate of cigarette use in the country. Debate in Ohio over the steps the state should take to curb smoking, including the starting of smoking by young people, came to the fore in January as the General Assembly voted to override Gov. Mike DeWine's line-item veto of language in HB33 (Edwards) prohibiting local regulation of tobacco and alternative nicotine products.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE



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Lt. Gov. Jon Husted Thursday was joined by several state legislators to celebrate the expansion of the Transportation Research Center (TRC) that Rep. Jay Edwards (R-Nelsonville) said sends a message to people working in research and innovation around the country that Ohio is open for business. The TRC in East Liberty broke ground on a 66,000-square-foot expansion of its Impact Laboratory made possible by a \$24 million economic development grant within the One Time Strategic Community Investment Fund (OTSCIF) approved as part of capital budget HB2 (Cutrona-Upchurch). "It's a giant step in our constant commitment to keep pace with what's next in transportation technology," said TRC President and CEO Brett Roubinek. The existing Impact Lab at TRC will remain in use as the expansion project is completed, which is anticipated to take three years.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Board of Directors on Friday approved the transition of its Western Management Asset Company (WAMCO) assets to three of BWC's current long credit managers -- PIMCO, PGIM and Conning. The action follows a recommendation from investment consultant Meketa. The BWC Board held a special meeting earlier in September to terminate its contract with WAMCO because that company is now under investigation by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). In other action, the board approved changes to its hospital inpatient reimbursement rule for 2025, which is expected to result in an increase of 5 percent over estimated 2024 payments.

WORKFORCE

Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, director of the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, Tuesday announced the fifth round of the Industry Sector Partnership (ISP) Grant opportunity. The program funds partnerships that help prepare Ohioans for the workforce while meeting the needs of job creators and local economies. Tuesday, a new application period opened with \$5 million available for new and existing industry sector partnerships. ISPs can be located in any region of Ohio, as long as the focus is on an in-demand sector, such as manufacturing or technology. The application period for the fifth round began Oct. 1 and closes Thursday, Oct. 31 at 3 p.m. To apply and learn more about the Industry Sector Partnership Grant, visit Workforce.Ohio.gov/ISP.

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