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Emergency Management Association of Ohio
Legislative Update
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HB23 **CREATE ESCAPED CONVICT ALERT PROGRAM, ALLOW PARENT COMPANY APPLICATION** (ROEMER B, WILLIAMS J) To create the escaped convict alert program and to allow a prior parent company of a bank to apply to the Secretary of State for the appointment and commission of banking police officers.

Current Status: 12/1/2025 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. 3/2/26
State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-23

HB26 **REQUIRE STATE, LOCAL IMMIGRATION COOPERATION** (WILLIAMS J, FISCHER T) To require state and local authorities to cooperate with the federal government in the enforcement of immigration laws, to prescribe funding reductions for noncompliance, to name this act the Protecting Ohio Communities Act, and to declare an emergency.

Current Status: 4/29/2025 - House Public Safety, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-26

HB96 **OPERATING BUDGET** (STEWART B) To make operating appropriations for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027, to levy taxes, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of state programs.

Current Status: 10/1/2025 - Consideration of Governor's Veto; Senate Overrides Veto on Item 66, Vote 21-11
State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-96

HB309 **LAW CHANGES-COUNTY BUDGET COMMISSIONS** (THOMAS D) To modify the law governing county budget commissions and property taxation.

Current Status: 12/19/2025 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. 3/20/26
State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-309

HB317 **UAS PURCHASE LIMITS-FOREIGN ENTITIES** (MATHEWS T) To prohibit the purchase of small unmanned aircraft systems manufactured or assembled by a covered foreign entity.

Current Status: 5/19/2026 - **BILL AMENDED**, House Technology and Innovation, (Third Hearing)
State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-317

HB335 **LIMIT INSIDE MILLAGE REVENUE INCREASES** (THOMAS D) To limit revenue increases from inside millage levies occurring due to a reappraisal or update.

Current Status: 12/19/2025 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. 3/20/26

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-335

HB365 **PROVIDE PROPERTY TAX REFUNDS** (BRENNAN S, HALL D) To authorize a refundable income tax credit or rebate for homeowners and renters whose property taxes or a portion of their rent exceed five per cent of their income and to name this act the Property Tax Refund Act.

Current Status: 11/10/2026 - House Ways and Means, (First Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-365

HB413 **CREATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE DATABASE** (YOUNG T, PETERSON B) To create the Ohio Local Government Expenditure Database and require political subdivision participation, to require the state retirement systems to participate in the Ohio State Government Expenditure Database, and to make an appropriation.

Current Status: 6/2/2026 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-413

HB420 **ELIMINATE PROPERTY TAXES BY 2030** (CLICK G, WILLIS B) To disallow and, by 2030, eliminate property taxes levied for a continuing period of time and to name this act The Taxpayers Freedom Trilogy – Act One: Discontinuing the Continuum.

Current Status: 5/20/2026 - House Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-420

HB421 **ALLOW PROPERTY TAX REDUCTION BY INITIATIVE** (CLICK G, THOMAS D) To reduce unvoted property taxes by initiative and to name this act the Taxpayers Freedom Trilogy – Act Two: Arresting Inside Millage.

Current Status: 9/15/2025 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-421

HB422 **INCREASE PROPERTY TAX PASSAGE THRESHOLDS** (CLICK G, NEWMAN J) To increase the approval threshold required for passage of certain property taxes and to name this act the Taxpayers Freedom Trilogy – Act Three: The Triumph of the Taxpayer.

Current Status: 9/15/2025 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-422

HB425 **PROHIBIT TRESPASS, UNAUTHORIZED RECORDING-DRONES** (HOOPS J) To prohibit trespass and types of unauthorized recording with an unmanned aerial vehicle system.

Current Status: 11/9/2026 - **BILL AMENDED**, House Transportation, (Fourth Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-425

HB466 **LEVY REQUIREMENT-PROPERTY TAX APPROVAL** (LEAR B, RITTER K) To require certain subdivisions to obtain the approval of the body that created the subdivision before levying a property tax.

Current Status: 3/4/2026 - House Local Government, (First Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-466

HB473 **PROHIBIT PUBLIC EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTION PAYMENTS** (THOMAS D) To prohibit a public employer from paying employee contributions to a state retirement system.

Current Status: 2/25/2026 - House Public Insurance and Pensions, (Third Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-473

HB499 **LAW CHANGES-COUNTY BUDGET COMMISSIONS** (BARHORST T, KING A) To modify the law governing county budget commissions and property taxation.

Current Status: 10/8/2025 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-499

HB503 **REQUIRE VOTER APPROVAL-RECIPROCITY TAX CREDITS** (ROEMER B, WORKMAN H) To require voter approval to reduce or repeal a municipal income tax reciprocity credit, to allow a voter initiative to enact or increase such a credit, and to require the Department of Taxation to conduct a study of municipal income taxation.

Current Status: 11/17/2026 - Senate Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-503

HB520 **ESTABLISH COUNTY BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEES** (MATHEWS T, THOMAS D) To establish and convene a Blue Ribbon Committee in each county to review and assess each taxing unit within the county and each county program or department

to identify duplication of services and generally to streamline and improve county efficiency and effectiveness.

Current Status: 2/4/2026 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, House Local Government, (Third Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-520

HB598 **ALLOW RESIDENTIAL STABILITY ZONES-TAXES** (SIGRIST M, HOOPS J) To authorize local governments to create residential stability zones where homeowners may qualify for a partial property tax exemption.

Current Status: 3/11/2026 - House Ways and Means, (First Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-598

HB608 **LAW CHANGES-PROPERTY TAXES** (THOMAS D, GLASSBURN C) To modify the law governing property taxes and other local taxes.

Current Status: 6/9/2026 - House Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-608

HB673 **PROPERTY TAX CREDIT EXPANSION** (STEPHENS J) To expand the statewide owner-occupied residence property tax credit to all tax levies.

Current Status: 2/25/2026 - House Ways and Means, (First Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-673

HB695 **NDA PROHIBITION-LOCAL OFFICIALS** (BIRD A, STEWART B) To prohibit certain local elected officials from entering into nondisclosure agreements.

Current Status: 6/3/2026 - House Local Government, (Third Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-695

HB746 **POLITICAL SUBDIVISION HEALTH PLANS** (THOMAS D) To allow a political subdivision to participate in the same state health plan offered to state employees.

Current Status: 3/18/2026 - Referred to Committee House Local Government

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-746

HB833 **REGARDING RETIREMENT SYSTEM INVESTMENTS** (LAMPTON B) Regarding investment options for state retirement system defined contribution plans.

Current Status: 6/3/2026 - House Public Insurance and Pensions, (First Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-833

HB948 **REGARDING E-BIKE OPERATION, SAFETY** (WHITE A, MILLER K) Regarding electric bicycle operation, education, and traffic safety.

Current Status: 11/17/2026 - House Transportation, (Second Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-948

HB973 **CREATE EMERGENCY ACCESS ROUTES-RAILROADS** (PIZZULLI J, HALL T) To create designated access routes across railroads for emergency vehicles.

Current Status: 11/10/2026 - Referred to Committee House Transportation

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-973

HB1001 **DISALLOW PROPERTY TAXES-LIENS** (NEWMAN J) To disallow property taxes from being a lien on property and instead requiring them to be the personal liability of the property owner, to require county treasurers to abate delinquent taxes on property owned by senior citizens or certain disabled veterans, and to name this act the Private Property Protection Act.

Current Status: 11/10/2026 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-1001

HJR10 **CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE-PROPERTY TAX INCREASES** (LARE J, MILLER K) Proposing to enact Section 2b of Article XII of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to partially exempt the increased value of owner-occupied residences from taxation.

Current Status: 11/10/2026 - Referred to Committee House General Government

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HJR-10

SB69 **INTENTION TO REFORM-STATE PUBLIC RETIREMENT SYSTEMS** (ROMANCHUK M) To declare the General Assembly's intent to enact legislation to reform the law governing the state's public retirement systems.

Current Status: 2/12/2025 - Referred to Committee Senate Financial Institutions, Insurance and Technology

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-SB-69

SB275 **ELIGIBLE HOMEOWNERS-DEFER PROPERTY TAX PAYMENT** (CRAIG H, REYNOLDS M) To allow eligible homeowners to defer the payment of a portion of their property taxes.

Current Status: 10/28/2025 - Senate Ways and Means, (First Hearing)

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-SB-275

SB478 **SALES TAX VOTER APPROVAL-LARGE COUNTIES** (PATTON T) To prohibit the levy of sales and use taxes without voter approval by counties with a population of over one million.

Current Status: 11/10/2026 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means

State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-SB-478

Friday, Nov. 13, 2026

ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Attorney General Andy Wilson joined leaders of the Center of Science and Industry (COSI) and a number of students Monday to launch a new exhibit that explores the science of opioid addiction, prevention, healthy choices and recovery. Frederic Bertley, president and CEO of COSI, said the new exhibit at the Columbus museum as well as a traveling version, titled "Signals of Hope," is about partnerships. COSI partnered with the attorney general's office on the exhibit, with the AG providing a $5 million grant. The exhibit helps those viewing it to understand the neurons in the brain and what can lead to addiction. It also exposes students to potential career paths and how to combine prevention with recovery.

AMERICA 250-OHIO

The commission that has spent 2026 celebrating Ohio's role in the nation's history will pivot to try to envision generations to come as America 250-Ohio is inviting young people to submit their ideas for a Future Ohio Symposium planned for December. Young people ages 15-20 are invited to submit an original idea that would change, create, improve or imagine a better future for the state through America 250-Ohio's Be Your Future, Ohio! initiative. The Future Ohio: Projecting Ohio in 2076 initiative encourages Ohioans to reflect on the state's past while envisioning its future, and the initiative will culminate with a symposium in December to explore the opportunities and challenges that will shape Ohio for generations to come. More information about the free Future Ohio Symposium can be found HERE. Youth ages 15-20 can submit ideas HERE.

ATTORNEY GENERAL-ELECT TRANSITION

Attorney General-elect John Kulewicz Tuesday announced his campaign manager, Colin Flanagan, will serve as director for his transition team. Flanagan, who previously lost a

Democratic primary for the Ohio House in 2022, helped Kulewicz defeat Republican Keith Faber in last week's election. He has a bachelor's degree from Ohio State University, and a master's and law degree from the University of Toledo. Kulewicz said interested parties who would like to work in his administration should submit a resume and statement of interest to kulewicztransition@gmail.com.

AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Gov. Mike DeWine, Honda and local officials announced Monday the automaker plans to build a new plant in Central Ohio, marking its fourth in the state. That facility and expansion at current Honda engine and transmission plants in Ohio will see a $3.38 billion investment and 2,390 expected jobs. The new plant is expected to have a 240,000 vehicles per year capacity, enabling production of multiple vehicle types and powertrains including hybrid, gasoline-powered and battery-electric vehicles. It will be located between Honda's Marysville and East Liberty sites, and production is expected to begin in 2029, pending final government approvals. The plant will have "leading-edge automation, data-driven technologies and flexible production systems," according to the DeWine administration.

FY26-27 BUDGET

Preliminary tax receipt totals for October from the Office of Budget and Management (OBM) show continued above-target collections. The two major revenue sources yielded tens of millions more than forecasted. Total tax receipts in October hit $2.6 billion, 5.8 percent or almost $146 million more than expected. For the fiscal year so far, the surplus now stands at $376.7 million, with total collections of $10.5 billion exceeding estimates by 3.7 percent. Sales taxes brought in $1.33 billion, $85 million or 6.8 percent more than expected, with the non-auto sales tax exceeding forecasts by more than $78 million or 7.4 percent and the auto-sales tax netting $6.5 million or 3.6 percent more than expected. The income tax exceeded estimates by $62.8 million or 7.8 percent to reach $868 million in collections in October.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

Sen. Bill DeMora (D-Columbus) said Tuesday he will begin offering his child marriage ban legislation as an amendment to every bill that hits the Senate floor if leadership won't bring it up separately. DeMora, SB341 joint sponsor Sen. Bill Blessing (R-Cincinnati), survivors of child marriage and other lawmakers called a press conference Tuesday to push for lame-duck passage of the bill. "If my colleagues want to keep tabling it, then the people of Ohio are going to see that they have no problem with underage kids getting married," said DeMora. Blessing said he was perplexed at the inaction and could not identify the source of the holdup, other than to say a member or two can sometimes block

legislation in the Senate Majority Caucus. "But I can assure you it is not the Senate president," Blessing said.

DISABILITIES

Advocates for people with developmental disabilities paired return-on-investment research for early intervention services with the worsening budget circumstances of county agencies to urge lawmakers to provide additional funding to sustain the system Monday. The House Children and Human Services Committee heard from proponent witnesses on HB939, a bill sponsored by the committee chair, Rep. Andrea White (R-Kettering), as well as Rep. Mike Odioso (R-Cincinnati). The legislation would require county boards of developmental disabilities to fund and provide early intervention services and have the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) cover at least half the costs. White characterized the measure Monday as a lead-in to next year's budget deliberations, saying the legislation was unlikely to get any more hearings yet this session. White asked a representative of the Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities (OACBDD) to address the increase in the number of children qualifying for early intervention services and the financial status of OACBDD members. "A lot of that is because we are getting a lot better at recognizing and diagnosing these conditions and developmental delays in children, especially at hospitals and other ways outside of the county boards' being able to directly diagnose them," said Jacob Dowling, legislative affairs manager for OACBDD.

ECONOMY

The nation added 165,000 jobs in October and the federal unemployment rate fell to 4.1 percent from 4.2 percent in September, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) announced Friday. According to BLS, there were 7.1 million unemployed people in October. The agency noted that the federal unemployment rate has stayed in a range of 4.1 to 4.3 percent since March. The report also saw good news as August numbers were revised upwards by 53,000 jobs, from plus 133,000 jobs to 186,000 jobs; and September numbers were revised upwards by 31,000 jobs, from plus 29,000 jobs to plus 60,000 jobs.

EDUCATION

A court ruling this week upholding the Ohio High School Athletic Association's (OHSAA) decision to sanction the Glenville High School football team highlighted what the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) called "significant challenges faced by high-mobility student populations." The Eighth District Court of Appeals on Thursday issued a decision to allow OHSAA to sanction Glenville for inaccurately assigning student participation opportunities to two students on the Glenville football team who attended Ginn Academy, a magnet school that is not OHSAA-sanctioned. According to

an OHSAA press release from Oct. 29, "Students who attend Ginn Academy can only participate in athletics at the Cleveland Metro school that is closest to their residence," ruling that Glenville forfeit the next day's game against Hunting Valley University School. OHSAA disallowed Glenville's participation in its first-round playoff game scheduled for Oct. 30 against Hunting Valley University School.

The Ohio Department of Education identifies the following four strategies for improvement in its new "Plan for Gifted K-12 Education":

- Improve gifted identification practices.

- Provide highly effective student supports and services.

- Expand professional learning for educators and administrators.

- Increase meaningful family and caregiver engagement.

According to the plan, 234,665 Ohio students were identified as gifted in the 2025-2026 academic year at traditional district schools, representing 17 percent of the population in those schools.

The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) aligned its rules with recent actions by the General Assembly at its regular meeting on Thursday. The Aging School Accelerator Pilot Program, established in capital budget SB450 (Cirino), directs OFCC to provide support for the classroom facilities projects meeting the following criteria:

- The district has at least one building that is used primarily for classroom instruction in which all or a significant portion of the structure is at least 100 years old.

- The district has never been approved to receive assistance under a Classroom Facilities Assistance Program (CFAP) or has not completed all segments of a project approved under the program.

- The district's operating expenditure per pupil for FY25 was in the lowest 25 percent of all school districts in the state.

- The district qualifies to serve all of its students in one school building according to the commission's policies.

In the one-time determination established in SB450, OFCC will decide which school districts will be eligible for capital funding based on the above requirements, and school districts that participate will no longer be eligible for CFAP.

As it gears up to make the case for its role in state government amid another budget cycle and a gubernatorial transition, the Broadcast Educational Media Commission (BEMC) discussed Thursday how its infrastructure played a role in live public media election coverage. Dan Shellenbarger, general manager of Ohio Public Media Service, the umbrella organization for the Ohio Channel and the Ohio Public Radio and Television Statehouse News Bureau, discussed live coverage provided for last week's mid-term election. Technological innovations allowed public media to pull off the effort at far less cost than a similar production 12 years ago. Public media journalists used LiveU technology units for last-mile connections from election night events for the major parties to public media stations, which then used the BEMC infrastructure to broadcast statewide.

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) officially approved the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's (DEW) finalized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver request and proposed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) amendments late last month, DEW Chief Performance and Innovation Officer Chris Woolard said Thursday during the department's regular public meeting. The approved waiver request, which had undergone several revisions prior to its submission over the summer, allows the state to consolidate over $38 million in federal funds through 2029, according to USDOE.

ELECTIONS 2026

Hannah News has available the list of winners in the General Election with their filing addresses for state representative, state senate and congressional races. The list of state representative winners includes the top two candidates in four races that are likely headed to recount -- the 29th House District race between Rep. Cindy Abrams (R-Harrison) and Democrat Jonathan Bradner; the 37th House District race between Rep. Tom Young (R-Washington Twp.) and Tom Herner; the 44th House District race Republican Ed Schimmel and Democrat David Fournier; and the 75th House District race between Rep. Haraz Ghanbari (R-Perrysburg) and Democrat Richard Rettig. There is also a list of preliminary election results, a preliminary legislative directory for the 137th General Assembly, and the preliminary *Faces of the 137th General Assembly*.

Political campaign ad spending reached new heights in Ohio in 2026, according to political ad tracker AdImpact, and while explanations abound since Election Day about the zeitgeist that motivated Tuesday's election results in Ohio and nationwide, final data shows that in Ohio, Republicans may not have gotten a proportionate payoff at the polls for the record of ad money spent. A grand total of $880,633,475 was spent since Jan. 1 this year among all media by races on the statewide and federal levels, surpassing the previous record of $655,199,033 in ad spending in 2024. AdImpact reports that ad spending across congressional, gubernatorial, down-ballot and state legislative races

reached $11.87 billion nationwide for 2025-2026, topping the previous record of $11.2 billion spent in 2023-2024 and both dwarfing approximately $9 billion spent in both the '19-'20 and '21-'22 cycles. The lion's share of Ohio's grand total was spent in the U.S. Senate race in which Sherrod Brown defeated U.S. Sen. Jon Husted (R-OH) to return to Washington, D.C.

Republicans benefited from political dynamics that might have blunted their expected mid-term losses, but for President Donald Trump's decisions and unpopularity, political forecaster Charlie Cook told attendees at Tuesday's annual meeting of the Ohio Council of Retail Merchants (OCRM). "I'm just going to come at this assuming that over half of you are Republicans? Is that safe?" Cook said at the lunchtime gathering. "If I were a Republican, I'd very, very angry at the president, because this didn't have to be this bad." Cook said the party that holds the White House had lost U.S. House seats in 18 of 20 mid-terms going back to World War II, and 13 of 20 for the U.S. Senate. Decades of gerrymandering that winnowed the pool of truly competitive seats and a slim U.S. House majority that theoretically left Republicans without much more room to fall were mitigating factors for the GOP heading into the mid-term. But the ground shifted under Republicans, as the swing vote expanded to include small towns and rural areas recently unfriendly to Democrats but particularly exposed to cost pressures from tariffs and fuel price spikes.

The 2026 mid-term election results did more than just bring Democrats into power in more legislative chambers and governor's offices. It reconfigured the regions where the two parties faced divided government and saw voters weigh in on numerous ballot measures, many addressing policy debates familiar to Ohio. Elections experts at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) reviewed the fallout on a recent videoconference, putting the results in the context of other mid-term wipeouts. Presenters included Katy Owens Hubler, director of elections and redistricting for NCSL, and Helen Brewer, policy specialist. Speaking while votes were still being counted in many states, Hubler said Democratic state legislators picked up more than 400 and potentially more than 500 seats. By comparison, the sitting president's party typically losses around 300 seats in a mid-term, while Republicans picked up more than 700 in the 2010 Republican tsunami. Democrats went from controlling 39 legislative chambers to 51, she said. "This is bigger than recent history," Hubler said.

Brewer gave an overview of the 147 November ballot measures facing states' voters. The total number of measures represents an increase from 2020 and 2022 but is on pace with 2016 and 2018. The proportion of legislative referrals of issues to the ballot has been increasing, she noted. That is the only option for ballot access common to all states, whereas only some allow initiatives and referendums, both of which are avenues to the ballot in the Ohio Constitution.

ENERGY/UTILITIES

Executive Director Ryan Augsburger of the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) stopped short of recommending Commissioner John Williams of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) for chairman under the incoming Amy Acton administration Thursday but cited his and other stakeholders' push for a "shakeup" in regulatory philosophy focused at least as much on consumers as on the industry. OMA hosted a post-election press conference near Capitol Square committed to a "fresh look" at PUCO's staff-level analysis and commission oversight of public utility rates in Ohio. "I have a feeling a few people in the utility business are not going to appreciate this conversation," Augsburger announced. "Manufacturers have been footing the bill for years. We're done accepting that."

Gov.-elect Amy Acton has a lot to say about utility rates and their nexus to Big Data and likely a few thoughts for members of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) -- whom she appoints -- and for the Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) as residential utility advocate. Itself an independent, statutory agency, OCC convened its Governing Board this week to news some regional utilities are proposing major rates hikes exceeding Consumers' Counsel Maureen Willis's requested cap at a time of high inflation. Willis updated the board Monday on PUCO filings and proposed double-digit rate hikes. She offered Ohio Gas Company's requested rate increase of 15.6 percent in addition to a fixed monthly service charge "nearly triple" its current $9. "My recommendation to staff and OCC consultants is that we can't have a double-digit increase," the consumers' counsel observed, citing unsustainable consumer costs. "At this time, it is just not feasible nor appropriate to have more than a single-digit increase."

FEDERAL

Two members of Ohio's congressional delegation were elevated to bigger roles in the next Congress, as U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Urbana) will serve as House Minority Leader and U.S. Sen. Bernie Moreno (R-OH) will chair the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC). Jordan was chosen by Republican members of the incoming Congress during a caucus vote Tuesday, defeating current House Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R-LA). Republicans lost the majority during midterm elections last week. Moreno, who currently serves as a vice chair of NRSC, was announced as its chair-elect Tuesday. He succeeds U.S. Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC).

GAMING/GAMBLING

Ohio Lottery Director Michelle Gillcrist updated members of the Ohio Lottery Commission on their gaming system conversion effort during November's meeting, saying that is "a very big process" that will last "months and months" -- likely through the

end of 2027. New equipment was sent out to retailers in October but the overall effort involves replacing nearly 12,000 terminals and more than 9,000 pieces of self-serve equipment, with more than 70,000 equipment items in total. She confirmed that it is the Ohio Lottery's largest transition effort in history as well, also including the challenge of switching from one vendor to another. The new vendor can't receive all information as some of that is proprietary, Gillcrist continued, and they want customers to be able to buy a ticket on an old machine then cash it on the new one the next day. "That's why it's so important in this transition that we have people here that have that institutional knowledge of the current gaming system and how we're going to transform that into the new gaming system," she added.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Senate Republicans selected their leadership team for the 137th General Assembly Tuesday, with Sen. Bill Reineke (R-Tiffin) getting the nod to serve as Senate president as expected. Sen. George Lang (R-West Chester) will serve as president pro tempore. Sen. Theresa Gavarone (R-Bowling Green) will serve as majority floor leader, while Sens. Tom Patton (R-Strongsville) and Susan Manchester (R-Lakeview) will serve as majority whips.

House Speaker Matt Huffman (R-Lima) is expected to vie for a second term at the helm of the House Republicans despite caucus membership losses in the recent election, but the current leadership slate will necessarily look much different next term because of its reliance on members who won't be in the chamber in the 137th General Assembly. Of the nine-person majority leadership slate, five didn't or couldn't seek House re-election. Speaker Pro Tempore Gayle Manning (R-North Ridgeville) is on her way back to the Senate after defeating Rep. Joe Miller (D-Amherst) in a bid to succeed her son, former Sen. Nathan Manning (R-North Ridgeville). Assistant Speaker Pro Tempore Phil Plummer (R-Dayton) also won election to the Senate to succeed Sen. Steve Huffman (R-Tipp City). Both Gayle Manning and Plummer were also term-limited.

While four House races are too close to call, the 137th General Assembly will have at least 33 freshmen who are either newly elected, returning or switching chambers. That currently includes 20 Democrats and 13 Republicans between the House and Senate.

The official Senate calendar for Tuesday was fairly short, including concurrence with House changes on gun law measures SB214 (Koehler) and passage of the following bills as well:

- **HB371** (Deeter-Johnson), to expand allowable uses of profits from jail commissary funds, which passed 31-1.

- **HB13** (Pizzulli), to designate Nov. 5 as "Roy Rogers Day," which passed 32-0.

The House Tuesday seated Rep. Caleb Stidham (R-Sandusky) and passed eight bills while agreeing to Senate amendments on another as lame duck session got underway. Stidham was elected to the 89th House District last week and replaces former Rep. DJ Swearingen (R-Huron), who had resigned to take a job with the Department of Justice.

In addition to passing legislation that removes firearm mufflers and suppressors from the classification of dangerous ordnance, SB214 (Koehler) the chamber adopted legislation addressing physical education requirements in schools. Rep. Tom Young (R-Washington Twp.) said the policy reflected in HB304 (Young-M. Miller) was brought to him and co-sponsor Rep. Melanie Miller (R-Ashland) by students themselves. The bill passed 92-1, with Rep. Diane Mullins (R-Hamilton) the lone vote against it.

The House also passed unanimously HB82 (Click-Johnson), which raises penalties for traffic offenses in construction zones. Sponsor Rep. Gary Click (R-Vickery) noted that while the bill is named for Trenton Gallaway, who was killed in a traffic work zone, there are "literally hundreds of others that could adorn this bill," pointing to the death of Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) bridge inspector Jennifer Donley, who was struck and killed by a semi-truck while working in a construction zone along Interstate 70 near Zanesville Monday. The bill includes requirements that driver education classes incorporate instruction on work zone safety, and allows those charged with offenses to take a driver safety class in lieu of paying a fine.

Also passing the House Tuesday were the following bills:

- **HB255** (Jarrells-M. Miller), creating the Ohio Sports Council, by a vote of 88-7. The no votes came from Republicans in the House.

- **HB452** (C. Thomas-Lawson-Rowe), designating Oct.1 as 761st Tank Battalion Day, by a unanimous vote.

- **HB530** (Brewer-Salvo) to establish the Long-term Care Workforce Study Commission, by a vote of 88-3.

- **HB567** (Deeter) updating and modifying laws regarding the Board of Nursing advisory body for advance practice registered nurses, by a vote of 89-0.

- **HB762** (Lear-D. Thomas), exempting certain vending machine food purchases from sales and use tax, by a vote of 89-1. Rep. Jason Stephens (R-Kitts Hill) was the sole "no" vote.

Additionally, the House concurred on Senate amendments to HB397 (Deeter-Johnson), expanding the allowable uses of profits from commissary funds, by a vote of 71-22.

House Speaker Matt Huffman (R-Lima) told reporters that lawmakers plan to vote on the leadership for the next General Assembly on Tuesday, Nov. 17. Huffman confirmed he is seeking to continue to serve as speaker of the House for the 137th General Assembly. He noted he has spoken with 80 percent of his caucus, all of whom he said have pledged their support for him. "I'm sure there are going to be two or three people who don't want to vote for me," he said. "I don't think it's close ... I don't think anybody's running against me, so as far as I know, I'll be the nominee of the majority party, and I hope to get support from the minority party also."

West Virginia has the Mothman. And if Reps. Jean Schmidt (R-Loveland) and Tristan Rader (D-Lakewood) have anything to say about it, Ohio will soon have the Loveland Frog or Frogman as its official state cryptid. Calling Frogman something that is "uniquely Ohio ... something mysterious, something memorable, and something that has captured the imagination of generations," Schmidt went on to recount Loveland Frog's legendary history dating back to 1955. That was when a local businessman reported spotting "lizard-like, scaly creatures standing at about three or four feet tall along the banks" of the Little Miami River. When he stopped his car to get a closer look, the creatures "fled back to the river."

In other action, the House Transportation reported out highway naming bill HB416 (J. Miller-G. Manning); and the House Veterans and Military Development Committee reported out HB632 (Ritter) which allows designation of a Gold Star Family member on the driver’s license and state ID card; the House Ways and Means Committee reported out HB737 (Roemer-T. Hall) regarding the rounding of cash payments.

GOVERNOR

Gov. Mike DeWine said that he would review legislation that would move the Common Sense Initiative (CSI) to the jurisdiction of the General Assembly but continued to say he won't sign legislation that weakens gubernatorial power. Speaking to reporters after the Veterans Hall of Fame Ceremony on Thursday, DeWine said he will wait to see what ideas lawmakers present to him that would reform state government and the powers of the governor before taking a position on them. One of the proposals introduced this week is Rep. Jamie Callender's (R-Concord) HB1024, which among other provisions, would put CSI under the General Assembly. First introduced under Gov. John Kasich, the initiative reviews rules issued by state agencies and their impact on businesses. DeWine said he is reserving judgment on the proposal until he reviews it.

Asked by *Hannah News* about the resignation of Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang over affair allegations, including with a woman suspected of being a Chinese spy, DeWine said he does not think it will affect a Pike County artificial intelligence infrastructure project. "I'm following the story. It keeps getting more interesting every day, and we'll just have to see what impact it's going to have," he said.

Appointments made over the week include the following:

- Robin T. Burrow of The Plains (Athens County) to the Hocking College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Aug. 26, 2029.

- Angela I. Powell of Mount Gilead (Morrow County) to the Marion Technical College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending April 29, 2028.

- Jonathan L. Bridges of Ottawa Hills (Lucas County) and Myron D. Lewis of Findlay (Hancock County) to the Owens Community College Board of Trustees for terms beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Sept. 21, 2032.

- Jerad M. Barnett of Xenia (Greene County) to the Wright State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending June 30, 2032.

- Tiffany L. Peters of Barberton (Summit County) to the Financial Planning and Supervision Commission for the Barberton City School District for a term beginning Oct. 15, 2026, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.

- Diane M. Brunner of Toledo (Lucas County) reappointed to the State Board of Career Colleges and Schools for a term beginning
Nov. 21, 2026, and ending Nov. 20, 2031.

- Hannah A. Hill of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council for a term beginning Oct. 27, 2026, and ending Oct. 26, 2029.

- F. Rose Hartschuh of Sycamore (Crawford County), Matthew S. Kelly of Columbus (Franklin County), and Donald E. Jakeway of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Expositions Commission for terms beginning Dec. 2, 2026, and ending Dec. 1, 2032.

- LeeAnne M. Cornyn of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Board of Nursing for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Dec. 31, 2027.

- Denise L. Conway of Mount Vernon (Knox County) and Beth A. Husted of Uniontown (Summit County) to the State Board of Pharmacy for terms beginning Oct. 28, 2026, and ending June 30, 2030.

- S. Scott Milburn of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) to the Chemical Dependency Professionals Board for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Dec. 23, 2027.

- Michael D. Gedeon of Avon (Lorain County) to the State Speech and Hearing Professionals Board for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending March 22, 2029.

- Michelle L. Gebhart of Eaton (Preble County) and Robin M. Bordner of Fremont (Sandusky County) appointed and Nicole G. McCarthy of Columbus (Franklin County) and Amy E. Sabath of Painesville (Lake County) reappointed to the Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board for terms beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Oct. 10, 2029.

- Christopher M. Fleming of Ashville (Pickaway County) reappointed to the Ohio Landscape Architects Board for a term beginning
Nov. 11, 2026, and ending Nov. 10, 2031.

- Michael J. Hall of Galena (Delaware County) to the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending April 22, 2029.

- Matthew J. Winkle of Hillsboro (Highland County) to the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission for a term beginning Oct. 16, 2026, and ending Sept. 19, 2029.

- Tracy L. Smith of Lewis Center (Delaware County) reappointed to the State Fire Council for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Nov. 1, 2031.

- Eric J. Burgess of Newark (Licking County) appointed and Karen L. Beavers of Sidney (Shelby County), John L. Weimer, Jr. of Piqua (Miami County), Hamilton P. Schwartz of Cincinnati (Hamilton County), Lucas J. Bergman of Delaware (Delaware County), and Brian K. Hathaway of Greenville (Darke County) reappointed to the State Board of Emergency Medical, Fire, and Transportation Services for a term beginning Nov. 13, 2026, and ending Nov. 12, 2029.

- Caryn B. Candisky of Bay Village (Cuyahoga County) to the State Lottery Commission for a term beginning Oct. 6, 2026, and ending Aug. 1, 2028; and James J. Mermis of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) for a term beginning Oct. 6, 2026, and ending Aug. 1, 2029.

- Drake L. Prouty of Dresden (Muskingum County) to the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Aug. 21, 2030, and Jessica P. Kessel of Xenia (Greene County) for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Aug. 21, 2028.

- Jason C. Marvin of Bedford (Cuyahoga County), Emily A. Wampler of Columbus (Franklin County), Brooke M. Burns of Columbus (Franklin County), Ed Anderson of Painesville (Lake County). and Kathleen S. Lenski of Miamisburg (Montgomery County) reappointed to the Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice for terms beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Oct. 31, 2029.

- Nicole R. Stephan of Bolivar (Tuscarawas County) to the Ohio Council for Interstate Adult Offender Supervision for a term beginning Oct. 16, 2026, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor and Christopher A. Gipson of Hamilton (Butler County) for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor

- Abdoulaye B. Dieng of Whitehall (Franklin County), Comfort A. Cole-Kenneh of Gahanna (Franklin County), Elizabeth W. Waruiru of Columbus (Franklin County), and Hassan A. Omar of Westerville (Franklin County) reappointed to the New African Immigrants Commission for terms beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Oct. 7, 2029.

- Merle D. Griff of Massillon (Stark County) appointed to the Ohio Advisory Council for Aging for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Nov. 21, 2028, Carolyn S. Copus of Findlay (Hancock County) for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Nov. 21, 2027, and Nancy L. Bucci of Columbus (Franklin County), David M. Bass of Copley (Summit County), and Jennifer K. Carlson of Blacklick (Franklin County) reappointed for terms beginning Nov. 22, 2026, and ending Nov. 21, 2029.

- Kevin M. Milstead of Columbus (Franklin County) to the State Audit Committee for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending June 30, 2029.

- Larry Fletcher of Milan (Erie County) reappointed to the Ohio Lake Erie Commission for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Sept. 1, 2029.

- Stephen P. Buehrer of Powell (Delaware County) reappointed to the Oil and Gas Land Management Commission for a term beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Sept. 29, 2031.

- Scott F. Mong of Logan (Hocking County) to the Reclamation Commission for a term beginning Oct. 16, 2026, and ending June 28, 2030, and Levi D. Fogle of Caldwell (Noble County) for a term beginning Oct. 16, 2026, and ending June 28, 2028.

- Eve Mueller Henson of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) and Christine M. Denecker of Bluffton (Allen County) appointed to the Ohio Humanities Council for terms beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Oct. 30, 2029, Susan F. Smith of Westlake (Cuyahoga County) and Brodi J. Conover of Lebanon (Warren County) reappointed for terms beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Oct. 30, 2029, and Kevin S. Miller of New Albany (Franklin County) and Vladimir Kogan of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed for terms beginning Nov. 6, 2026, and ending Oct. 30, 2027.

GOVERNOR-ELECT TRANSITION

Gov.-elect Amy Acton announced Wednesday several people who'll be serving in key roles for her transition, including three co-chairs for operations, talent and policy to serve under the transition chair, Strickland administration veteran John Haseley.

- Elisabeth Hire, who was chief of staff for Acton's campaign and worked in the vice president's office under Joe Biden, is co-chair for operations.

- Gale King, retired chief administrative officer for Nationwide, is co-chair for talent.

- Janetta King, another Strickland aide who founded Innovation Ohio, is co-chair for policy.

- Keary McCarthy, executive director of the Ohio Mayor's Alliance and a former senior staffer for Democrats in the Ohio House, is senior adviser to the transition chair.

- Degee Wilhelm, founder and managing partner in a law firm with Haseley and a veteran of Democratic politics, is also serving as senior adviser.

- Tony Bishop, policy director for Acton's campaign, is senior policy advisor.

- Yibo Shao, a policy advisor to the Acton campaign with experience at the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and Service Employees International Union (SEIU), is also a senior policy advisor.

- Virginia Schaus is communications director; she held the deputy communications director role in the campaign.

- Melissa Sever, whose experience spans roles at the Public Health Accreditation Board, ODH, Columbus Public Health and Ohio State University College of Public Health, is senior operations advisor.

GUNS

Legislation to align Ohio law with recent federal decisions on short-barreled guns is headed to Gov. Mike DeWine's desk after committee and floor votes Tuesday. The legislation got scant bipartisan support in the House and lost Democratic backing in the Senate after SB214 (Koehler) was expanded from its original purpose of lifting limits on firearm suppressors to also include short-barreled shotguns and rifles. Ohio law labels those items "dangerous ordnance" but includes exceptions for those with federal registration. Over the summer, the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms said it would stop requiring registration for those short-barreled guns after a federal court ruling on the topic. That led Attorney General Andy Wilson to suggest legislative leaders re-examine the registration requirements remaining in Ohio law, saying they could ensnare otherwise law-abiding gun owners. The House Public Safety Committee adopted a substitute bill Tuesday to encompass the recent federal change, then sent the bill on to the House floor, where it passed 68-27, with Reps. Mark Sigrist (D-Grove City), Chris Glassburn (D-North Olmstead), Joe Miller (D-Amherst), and Bride Sweeney (D-Westlake) joining Republicans in support.

HIGHER EDUCATION

An Ohio State University (OSU) fraternity has been placed on temporary suspension after a video showing two individuals presumed to be on fire circulated the Internet last weekend. OSU spokesperson Chris Booker told *Hannah News* the university is aware of the "extremely concerning incident" and said that the individuals in question are "receiving needed medical care." The fraternity, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, has been placed on interim suspension pending a full investigation, he said.

Kent State University (KSU) recently received a $6.4 million financial commitment from local philanthropists Marie Rader and James Angiulo to support students pursuing nursing, fashion and music. The gift includes an outright donation of $400,000 and a $6 million bequest, according to the university. "Through their generous philanthropy, Jim and Marie have shown that they not only believe in our students and the great work happening here, but they are also confidently investing in the future of Kent State," said KSU President Todd Diacon in a statement.

JUDICIAL

The Ohio Supreme Court has issued a new "bench card" or guide for judges to use in civil cases and particularly for timely case management. Case-flow best practices cite relevant Court rules and explain how to triage incoming civil cases and assign them as "streamlined, general or complex." They also address dispute resolution and settlement discussions, "well-reasoned" continuances, and cases with pro se or self-represented parties. The Court took the opportunity to highlight several case management courses offered by the Ohio Judicial College (OJC):

- Fundamentals of Case-flow Management and Statistical Reporting 2026.

- Civil Case-Flow Best Practices 2026.

- Case-Flow Management and Statistics for Common Pleas Courts.

- Case-Flow Management and Statistics for Municipal and County Courts.

LOBBYISTS/ASSOCIATIONS

The County Engineers Association of Ohio (CEAO) announced the appointment of Michael-lynn Evans as executive director, effective Tuesday. According to the association, Evans has more than 13 years of experience representing CEAO before lawmakers and state agencies. "As a government affairs consultant with AP Consulting, LLC, Evans has worked alongside Ohio's county engineers to advance policies that strengthen local infrastructure, protect public safety, and support economic growth across the state," the association said in its announcement. Evans emphasized that her appointment represents both an opportunity to build on the association's longstanding achievements and a responsibility to prepare for the challenges ahead.

MENTAL HEALTH

The Ohio Legislative Behavioral Health and Children's caucuses held a joint virtual meeting Monday to discuss the ongoing challenges facing the behavioral health needs of Ohioans across the state. The meeting, which marked the final gathering of the year for both caucuses, featured remarks from legislative co-chairs Reps. Monica Robb Blasdel (R-Columbiana), Dontavius Jarrells (D-Columbus), Sen. Michele Reynolds (R-Canal Winchester) and Senate Minority Leader Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood). "In 2023, 33 percent of Ohio high school students reported that their mental health was not good most or all of the time, and 35 percent reported consistently feeling sad or hopeless, which was up from 26 percent a decade earlier," Robb Blasdel said. "More than 220,000 Ohio students enrolled in Medicaid had a diagnosed behavioral health condition during the 2022-2023 school year. At the same time, access to care remains a challenge, as 75 of Ohio's 88 counties are designated mental health professional shortage areas, and 53 counties had no child and adolescent psychiatrists in 2024. These numbers make clear that children's behavioral health cannot be treated as a secondary issue or addressed only when a child reaches a crisis," she added.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The award-winning Ohio State Parks system took a pioneering step into improving accessibility last week with the opening of a new Braille Trail at Wingfoot Lake State

Park near Mogadore. The Braile Trail features signage with both printed text and braille, enhancing opportunities for visitors of all abilities to explore nature in meaningful and engaging ways, and it is the first of its kind within the Ohio State Parks system. The trail features a self-guiding rope that allows visitors to navigate the path independently while interacting with "Spotty," a salamander character who serves as the Braille Trail Ambassador Guide. Six panels along the trail highlight wildlife and natural features of the area, as well as local landmarks. Each panel also incorporates 3-D-printed tactile elements, further making the trail one of the first in Ohio to use sustainable materials for accessible interpretation. Panels also feature QR codes that activate audible, spoken content for visitors with low vision or blindness.

POLITICS

Senate Republicans are still identifying their priorities for the remaining sessions of the 136th General Assembly and could take up veto overrides, Senate President Rob McColley told reporters Tuesday during a break in session. "They're still in development. Obviously, we have a number of members who've been working on pieces of legislation, sometimes for multiple General Assemblies," McColley said. "It's all very preliminary." He gave the same description of potential action to limit executive power, saying no decisions had been made, but did say he doubted the proposal to lower the veto override threshold in HJR11 (Ferguson) had support to pass. But he noted Republican lawmakers have spent the past few sessions trying to limit executive and agency powers, including through restrictions on giving internal policies the force of law.

Speaker Matt Huffman (R-Lima) also addressed efforts by members of his caucus to limit the governor's powers following introduction of HJR11. "From the legislative standpoint, we're always looking at things to make sure that the Legislature stays in a position where they can monitor what the executive branch is doing," Huffman said, noting legislative oversight encompasses more than just the governor's office. "What we're having is discussions about how we can reform government in lame duck, not just regarding the governor," he added. Huffman said he would be evaluating lawmakers' proposals for government reform as they come forth, noting Rep. Brian Stewart (R-Ashville) had already presented a proposal concerning the Controlling Board's notice process. "There are a number of reforms -- some of them have nothing to do with a new governor ... We're sort of gathering those and deciding what are constitutional, what are, practically make a difference to make sure that the Legislature, which is the representatives of the people, still have the appropriate authority, and the executive branch has the appropriate authority too," he said.

Speaking with reporters Tuesday following the House Rules and Reference Committee, House Minority Leader Dani Isaacsohn (D-Cincinnati) said his caucus' lame duck priorities remain focused on lowering the cost of living for Ohioans across the state.

"There are so many ways that we could be making life more affordable for people and families in Ohio, and this Legislature has refused to take action on that ... I think people spoke pretty clearly at how angry they are that elected officials have not done anything to address the high cost of living," he said.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) announced the addition Wednesday of two more sheriffs' offices and one city police department to state-accredited law enforcement agencies. The Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board also reviewed the latest draft standard for automated license plate readers (ALPR) and a sample policy statement for law enforcement agencies seeking to comply with the pending program requirement. Housed within the Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS), OCJS says board members voted to approve Champaign and Erie county sheriffs' offices and Springboro police for the Ohio Collaborative Law Enforcement Accreditation Program (OCLEAP), which now has 25 participating counties and 13 sheriffs.

SECRETARY OF STATE-ELECT TRANSITION

Secretary of State-Elect Allison Russo announced Monday that Alex Linser will serve as her transition director and Rachel Rossi as deputy transition director. Linser chairs the Hamilton County Democratic Party, while Rossi has served as Russo's senior advisor for the past nearly eight years. The two will lead preparations for the incoming administration ahead of Russo's swearing-in on Monday, Jan. 11, 2027. The transition team has launched a website where Ohioans interested in serving in Russo's administration can learn about opportunities and submit their resumes.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Controlling Board Monday approved a request from the Office of Budget and Management (OBM) to increase appropriation authority by $6.8 million in various non-General Revenue Funds and line items for 14 state agencies and licensing boards in FY27. In its request, OBM attributed the need for the increased appropriation authority to higher employee health care costs. Rep. Bride Sweeney (D-Westlake) asked Jason Akbar, the deputy director of budget at OBM, why projections were wrong during the budget process, leading to the need for an increased appropriation. Akbar explained that when OBM was working on the FY26-27 budget, they had instructed agencies to expect modest, single-digit percentage growth for health care costs. As to why the projections were off, he noted Sweeney's own comments about health care costs overall increasing for everyone, adding that there was not a singular item they can point to that led to a major increase.

The Ohio Inspector General's office said Tuesday that its investigation of three former Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) contract employees led to their indictment along with two alleged co-conspirators. The report on that investigation was released and referred to the Franklin County Prosecutor's office and Ohio Auditor of State in August. ODJFS reported to the inspector general's office in August 2024 that subcontractors of staffing agency TEKsystems had allegedly manipulated identity verification and program eligibility issues to improperly release previously denied PUA benefits to ineligible claimants. That led to improper release of $3.2 million in benefit funds related to 248 Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program claims. On Monday, a Franklin County grand jury indicted the five on charges including theft, tampering with records, telecommunications fraud and money laundering.

TAXATION

The House Ways and Means Committee Tuesday accepted substitute versions of three bills on property taxes -- HB391 (Daniels-Workman), HB575 (D. Thomas-Peterson) and HB590 (D. Thomas-Williams). All three bills received testimony as well.

TECHNOLOGY/AEROSPACE

House Technology and Innovation Chair Thad Claggett (R-Newark) gave his update to committee members on advances in artificial intelligence (AI) technology on Monday, saying that includes the rise of "super intelligence" (SI) engaged in "recursive self-improvement" and completing tasks alone. That creates ramifications around cybersecurity and infrastructure protection which he detailed at length, including use of AI in scam emails that particularly affect older people and those who are less tech-savvy. "Technology is improving, in the sense of its capability, but that has ramifications -- and so I want you to help us think through the pros and cons of that," he told the committee. That creates both positives and "substantial risk" which they have an opportunity to address in the remaining two months as well as during the 137th General Assembly.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

Ohio's average price per gallon for regular gasoline dropped back below $4 and below the national average after recently rising above both thresholds, according to AAA Ohio. Per-gallon prices dropped below $4 on average about a month ago after lawmakers temporarily suspended the 38.5 percent excise tax, but in mid-October prices began to rise and at one point jumped substantially to exceed the national average, hitting $4.40 two weeks ago. On Monday, the Ohio average per-gallon price was $3.80, compared to the national average of $4. A year ago, Ohio's average price was $3.06. Diesel prices remain well above $6, at $6.29. A year ago, the average price was $3.84.

Adding new requirements for the process of obtaining an accessible parking placard and ensuring proposed volunteer enforcement of accessible parking violations happens in a non-confrontational manner were among revisions adopted by a House committee for legislation updating accessible parking laws. The House Children and Human Services Committee called a third hearing Monday for HB712 (Craig) to adopt a substitute version and take further testimony. The legislation as originally introduced replaces criminal penalties with civil penalties and creates a statewide civil enforcement system, through a Volunteer Accessible Parking Enforcement Force (VAPEF), members of which would undergo training set by the Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS).

The Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) Tuesday approved a draft funding list for FY27-30 that would direct $46.7 million in funding towards 13 projects in 12 counties.

VETERANS

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) has officially instituted a new year-round discount on overnight camping and rentals at Ohio State Parks for veterans and active-duty military. The discount was established in SB223 (Patton) and became effective in September following Gov. Mike DeWine's signature this summer. Veterans can use their federal military ID or Ohio veteran ID card for a 25 percent discount on most services offered at Ohio State parks, excluding food and merchandise. All Ohioans can check availability and make reservations for state-operated facilities by calling 1-866-644-6727, and veterans and service members can present their ID upon check-in to receive the discount.

The DeWine administration recognized five recipients of its 2026 Military Service Award Tuesday in advance of Veterans Day, Wednesday, Nov. 11. The annual honor recognizes Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS) employees who have shown exceptional dedication to their community, state and country through military service and continued commitment to public safety. 2026 DPS Military Service Awardees include the following:

- Law Enforcement Services Director Ed Burkhammer of DPS's Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS)

- Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) Trooper Dakota Coniglio

- OSHP Trooper Michael Grant

- Lt. Bryan Sponaugle, commander, OSHP New Philadelphia Post

- Chief Mike Staff of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency's (EMA) Emergency Operations Center

The Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) Division of Financial Institutions issued a warning to veterans, current service members and their families about scams that target those groups, saying a recent federal publication found veterans reported more incidents of fraud, identity theft and other issues in 2024 than any of the other military consumer groups. That totaled 166,921 reports and $419 million in losses.

Because Veterans Day fell in the middle of Veterans Small Business Week, observed Monday, Nov. 9 through Friday, Nov. 13, the Ohio Department of Development (DOD) drew attention to resources it offers to help veteran-owned and veteran-friendly businesses. DOD's Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) provide business counseling and assistance to individuals starting or growing their business. Each center is staffed with certified business advisors who help entrepreneurs to develop strategies to increase sales, create jobs, and expand in their communities. Through Ohio's SBDCs, more than 1,151 veteran entrepreneurs have received counseling and training, totaling more than 5,800 hours of no-cost advising, DOD said. More information is HERE. DOD's Minority Business Development Division, working with Ohio's network of regional Minority Business Assistance Centers (MBACs), provides state certification assistance, technical professional assistance and access to capital. More information is HERE.

America 250-Ohio recently announced its theme for November: "Ohio Serves," recognizing veterans, first responders and volunteers whose service has shaped the state and nation. In keeping with the theme, the commission unveiled a series of events celebrating the contributions of veterans and first responders. "Ohio's story has always been carried forward by people who step up to serve, from the Revolutionary War veterans who settled here to the service members, first responders and volunteers who serve our communities today," said Todd Kleismit, the commission's executive director, in a statement. "This November, we're inviting Ohioans to thank a veteran, honor those who serve, give back through acts of service such as blood donation and discover the places across our state where leadership stories are told." The commission sponsored the National Veterans Memorial and Museum's annual Veterans Day event Wednesday, which featured a moderated conversation with three post-9/11 veterans reflecting on 250 years of military service and progress, as well as the 25th anniversary of 9/11. A full list of themed programs and events can be viewed HERE.

In his last Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame ceremony before leaving office, Gov. Mike DeWine highlighted veterans' initiatives that his administration has undertaken and said he expects successor Gov.-elect Amy Acton will continue to focus on veterans issues. He

said making Ohio friendly to veterans and members of the armed forces will always be a work in progress.