

OHIO PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Bill Information

HB74 ENACT FY22-23 TRANSPORTATION BUDGET *(OELSLAGER S)*

To make appropriations for programs related to transportation and public safety for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2023, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of those programs.

CURRENT STATUS

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

HB110 OPERATING BUDGET *(OELSLAGER S)*

To make operating appropriations for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2023, to levy taxes, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of state programs.

CURRENT STATUS

5/19/2021 - Senate Finance, (Seventh Hearing)

HB140 MODIFY ELECTION NOTICES, BALLOT LANGUAGE FOR PROPERTY TAX LEVIES *(MERRIN D)*

To enact the "Ballot Uniformity and Transparency Act" to modify the form of election notices and ballot language for property tax levies.

CURRENT STATUS

4/28/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means

HB141 MAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS *(SKINDELL M, UPCHURCH T)*

To make appropriations related to public transportation.

CURRENT STATUS

2/24/2021 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HB146

REGARDS APPLYING PREVAILING WAGE LAW TO PUBLIC PROJECTS (RIEDEL C, MANCHESTER S)

To allow political subdivisions, special districts, and state institutions of higher education to elect to apply the Prevailing Wage Law to public improvement projects.

CURRENT STATUS

3/3/2021 - House Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)

HB157

MODIFY MUNICIPAL INCOME TAX RULES - COVID WFH (JORDAN K, EDWARDS J)

To repeal Section 29 of H.B. 197 of the 133rd General Assembly to modify municipal income tax employer withholding rules for COVID-19-related work-from-home employees.

CURRENT STATUS

4/20/2021 - House Ways and Means, (Fifth Hearing)

HB267

LIMIT PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS (JORDAN K)

To limit the duration of public health orders and to allow the General Assembly to act via concurrent resolution in response to a public health emergency if the Governor or Department of Health does not.

CURRENT STATUS

5/4/2021 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government

HB275

EXPAND POLITICAL SUBDIVISION JOINT PURCHASING AUTHORITY (LAMPTON B)

To expand political subdivision joint purchasing authority to expressly include purchases for construction services.

CURRENT STATUS

5/12/2021 - House Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)

HB283

EXPAND DISTRACTED DRIVING LAWS (ABRAMS C, LAMPTON B)

To expand the texting while driving prohibition to a general prohibition against using an electronic wireless communications device while driving, with certain exceptions, and to create data collection requirements based on associated violations of the distracted driving laws.

CURRENT STATUS

5/5/2021 - Referred to Committee House Criminal Justice

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

To include emergency service telecommunicators and certain Ohio National Guard members as individuals whose residential and familial information is exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Law.

■ CURRENT STATUS

4/20/2021 - **REPORTED OUT**, House Civil Justice, (Fourth Hearing)

SB15 FISCAL OFFICERS-LIABILITY *(WILSON S)*

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

■ CURRENT STATUS

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

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

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

■ CURRENT STATUS

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

SB32 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION *(RULLI M)*

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

■ CURRENT STATUS

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

SB56 INDEMNITY-DESIGN CONTRACTS *(BLESSING III L)*

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

■ CURRENT STATUS

5/11/2021 - Senate Judiciary, (Fourth Hearing)

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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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



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

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

CURRENT STATUS

3/3/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means



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

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

CURRENT STATUS

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



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

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

CURRENT STATUS

4/21/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance



SB169 PROHIBIT MANDATORY VACCINATIONS *(BRENNER A)*

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

CURRENT STATUS

4/28/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Health



Week in Review

ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) announced Wednesday that it is working with the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and RecoveryOhio on "targeted distribution" of naloxone supplies in communities facing the highest overdose morbidity and mortality rates. The initiative involves rapid deployment of 60,000 doses to zip codes in 23 counties that have shown the highest need for the enhanced overdose reversal drug. Specific locations were chosen based on overdose death and

related emergency department data from ODH, with distribution weighted by population. All other counties in Ohio continue to have access to naloxone through normal methods.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

The 2021 Ohio Peace Officer Memorial Ceremony honoring fallen law enforcement officers was set to begin at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, May 6 at the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Ohio State Lodge in Columbus as a Memorial Motorcade and proceed to the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) in London for an 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. outdoor ceremony.

FY20-21 BUDGET

The Office of Budget and Management (OBM) reported a half billion dollar-plus miss on income tax collections in April but said it expects to make that up in May, which now includes the deadline for income tax filing after the pandemic prompted another delay. The state's largest revenue source, the sales tax, continued its strong performance with double-digit bumps over projections in both the auto and non-auto categories.

FY22-23 BUDGET

Senators questioned Ohio Department of Medicaid Director Maureen Corcoran on the handoff of beneficiaries to new managed care plans, her requests for the ability to transfer money within her agency's budget and a House proposal for the expansion population during budget testimony Wednesday. Corcoran gave formal remarks to the Senate Health Committee similar to those presented in the Senate Finance Committee a few weeks ago on HB110 (Oelslager).

Providers of nursing home, assisted living and home-based care said Wednesday they need reimbursement increases to get the staff needed to meet service demand, in the same hearing where Ohio Department of Aging Director Ursel McElroy said that the workforce is top of mind for her. During budget testimony on HB110 (Oelslager) in the Senate Health Committee, Sen. Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) asked McElroy to identify the area most affected by the past year's pandemic disruptions. McElroy said it was the workforce, saying she believes care staff will carry "intangible, residual" effects of the experience with them.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

Gov. Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Interim Director Matt Damschroder Monday recognized May as National Foster Care Month in an effort to highlight the continued need for stable homes for displaced youth. Over 15,000 Ohio children are in foster care, according to ODJFS.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Events recognizing the women's suffrage movement are beginning to get underway, with one taking place this week. During Monday's meeting of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission (WSCC), Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard) discussed a suffrage event that is scheduled for Friday, May 7. Fourth graders from Saint Mary School planned to dress up in period costumes and deliver famous suffrage speeches. The event was scheduled for 9:30 to 11 a.m. in the Statehouse Atrium.

CORONAVIRUS

Gov. Mike DeWine discussed Monday during his briefing how those who have not been vaccinated remain at "very significant" risk of COVID-19, in response to questions about a *New York Times* article on public health experts' concerns regarding when or if national herd immunity will be reached here in the U.S.

Bars and taverns were among the hardest hit businesses by COVID-19 restrictions, some of which were confusing or had tenuous connections to existing liquor regulations, an industry representative told a Senate committee Tuesday while urging the chamber to uphold House language voiding penalties for violating those restrictions.

Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Stephanie McCloud Tuesday signed four new amended health orders that generally exempt fully vaccinated staff in nursing homes and assisted living facilities from routine COVID-19 testing. The orders say "fully vaccinated" refers to a person who is more than two weeks following the receipt of the second dose of a two-dose series COVID-19 vaccine, or more than two weeks following the receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Public Health Recommendations for Vaccinated Persons.

Gov. Mike DeWine said Thursday that the state's mass vaccination clinic located at the Wolstein Center in downtown Cleveland will be offering the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine next week.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Officials on Monday unveiled the state's new Ohio Professional Golf Trail, publicizing Ohio's six professional tournaments this summer. The new trail is part of the state's effort to rebuild the tourism economy after the losses of 2020. TourismOhio is launching a \$4 million campaign to help promote the state to would-be travelers as well as people who might consider relocating to Ohio.

EDUCATION

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) last week recognized Ohio students entering military service with the Annual All-Ohio United States Armed Forces Career Commitment Celebration. In a new video, State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria and Maj. Gen. Deborah Ashenhurst, director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services, joined Gov. Mike DeWine to recognize and congratulate

students who have committed to military service, including active duty, Reserve and National Guard.

Richard Cordray is heading back to federal service, joining the Biden administration as chief operating officer of Federal Student Aid at the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). A former state treasurer and attorney general, Cordray was Ohio Democrats' 2018 nominee for governor. Before launching that bid, he was the inaugural enforcement director and later head of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

During a meeting of the State Board of Education Budget Committee Monday, members heard a presentation from Aaron Rausch, director of the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) Office of Budget and School Funding, about the education changes made in biennial budget bill HB110 (Oelslager), as well as an enumeration of ODE line items for schools. Rausch said the biggest education changes come from the inclusion of HB1 (Callender-Sweeney), the "fair school funding" overhaul of the state's school funding system, in the version of the budget passed by the House.

The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) Board of Directors has unanimously approved a recommendation from OHSAA Executive Director Doug Ute that membership dues be collected beginning with the 2021-22 school year. The new policy requires each high school to contribute \$50 per OHSAA-sanctioned sport in which the school participates. This is the first time in the organization's 114-year history that membership dues will be collected. Ute and his staff presented the new fee proposal in April.

ELECTIONS

Reps. Bride Rose Sweeney (D-Cleveland) and Michelle Lepore-Hagan (D-Youngstown) told their colleagues that Secretary of State Frank LaRose's directive limiting counties to one absentee ballot return drop box located only at the board of elections doesn't work for larger counties such as theirs that saw traffic jams last fall. Sweeney and Lepore-Hagan gave sponsor testimony on their HB209 to the House Government Oversight Committee Tuesday, saying their bill would expand access to secure ballot drop boxes for every voter across Ohio.

House Republicans formally introduced Thursday their voting law proposals in HB294 (Seitz-Ray), proposing online absentee ballot requests but a sooner deadline on when they must be mailed out to voters, drop boxes at elections offices for the final 10 days of voting, and the ability to register during visits to the BMV, among other changes. Democrats immediately went on the attack, saying it takes voting laws backward.

Rep. Stephanie Howse (D-Cleveland) may use funds from her campaign to create an "ambassador program" that would inform citizens of her district about legislative updates and other activities in the district, the Ohio Elections Commission said in an advisory opinion approved Thursday. Howse had contacted the commission asking if she could make certain expenditures from her campaign committee funds to create the program, which would utilize persons from her district to represent her and provide legislative updates to other residents in the district as well as inform them of opportunities available through the state and of other activities in the district at monthly neighborhood meetings and more events that may be held in the district.

Sen. Bob Peterson (R-Sabina) said Thursday that his campaign has raised more than \$200,000 since he announced his bid for Congress at the end of April. Peterson is one of several Republicans who have announced campaigns to succeed U.S. Rep. Steve Stivers (R-Columbus), who is retiring this month to head the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

ELECTIONS 2021

Sen. Sandra Williams (D-Cleveland) Monday officially launched her campaign to be mayor of Cleveland, saying her run "is a culmination of a lifetime of dedication to the city," adding that her story "is Cleveland's story."

Various media organizations reported light turnout as Ohioans went to the polls Tuesday to weigh in on a number of local issues, and the secretary of state's office reported few problems. A spokesman for Secretary of State Frank LaRose told *Hannah News* that the most interesting development involved a squirrel chewing through power lines in Trumbull County, temporarily knocking out power at the board of elections, but it was quickly restored.

Hamilton County Clerk of Courts Aftab Pureval was the top vote recipient in Tuesday's primary for Cincinnati mayor, earning 39.13 percent of the total vote, and will move on to the General Election to face Cincinnati Councilman David Mann, a former Cincinnati mayor, who came in second with 29.12 percent, according to unofficial results. Both are Democrats. In Dayton, City Commissioner Jeffrey J. Mims Jr. moves on to the General Election after he was the top vote recipient in the mayoral primary, taking 58.4 percent of the vote. He will face Rennes Bowers, a retired firefighter who was second in the three-man race with 25.75 percent. Two will face off in November to become the first woman to be mayor of Lima after Tuesday's four-way primary. Sharetta Smith was the top vote earner with 52.43 percent, followed by Elizabeth Hardesty, who had 34.51 percent. In Youngstown, Mayor Jamael Tito Brown easily won the Democratic primary with 58 percent of the vote. He will face Republican Tracey Winbush in November for re-election.

About two-thirds of school funding requests on local ballots passed in Tuesday's primary election, while libraries notched a perfect record of approval. The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) reports 50 of 73 school funding issues on the Tuesday ballot passed, a 68 percent passage rate and a slight increase from the 64 percent rate in the November 2020 election.

In human service levy election results, two of three children services levies, three of four senior services levies and the lone developmental disabilities levy passed. Only Portage County saw success in a request for new funding in its children services levy, while Knox County's children services levy and Jackson County's senior services levy, both seeking new funding, were defeated.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment claimants close to exhausting their eligibility may benefit from an expansion of a federal program that offers intensive re-employment services, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Interim Director Matt Damschroder announced Friday. The U.S. Department of Labor is providing more than \$146 million to fund state workforce agencies' Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) programs, with Ohio receiving \$5.6 million.

The Controlling Board Monday approved without objection a late request from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to release \$39 million in federal funds to be used to administer the unemployment insurance program. Brian Stout, legislative liaison for ODJFS, told the Controlling Board that the request gives the agency the appropriation authority to use the federal funds for unemployment administrative purposes including operation needs, staff payroll, and vendor services, as well as anti-fraud efforts. He said the request is part of a broader request for the release of \$71 million in federal funds to ensure the services and unemployment insurance payments are provided, adding the funds are expected to last ODJFS for the rest of the state fiscal year.

For the week ending May 1, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) reported 18,642 initial unemployment claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). This is the first time the number of new weekly jobless claims has fallen below 20,000 since October 2020.

FEDERAL

Vice President Kamala Harris visited Cincinnati on Friday for a roundtable discussion of public transportation. The vice president's visit is part of the White House's "Getting America Back on Track Tour" meant to promote the Biden administration's recently unveiled infrastructure package.

GAMING/GAMBLING

The state of Ohio should prohibit casinos and racinos from offering unlimited, tax-free promotional play wagers, according to the Fair Gaming Coalition of Ohio. As part of his organization's "Ohio First Plan" for sports gambling legalization, Greg Beswick said the state should define gross gaming revenue as "total dollars wagered minus prize money paid and other minor costs." In another announcement on Monday, Get Gaming Right Ohio -- an organization supported by Jack Entertainment, MGM Resorts International and Penn National Gaming -- released a report criticizing HB65 (LaRe-Holmes) for allowing "an estimated 876 locations for underregulated casino-style slot machines, providing unprecedented gambling access to Ohioans."

After holding eight meetings and hearing testimony from more than 50 witnesses, members of the Senate Select Committee on Gaming have introduced legislation legalizing sports gambling in Ohio. Committee Chair Kirk Schuring (R-Canton) provided details on SB176 (Manning-Antani) during a press conference on Thursday, saying the bipartisan "free market" proposal will allow casinos, racinos, pro sports teams and other types of businesses that can afford the \$1 million license to participate in the Ohio Casino Control Commission (OCCC)-regulated industry. The Ohio Lottery will also be allowed to offer sports-related games, Schuring said.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Wednesday's Senate session included passage of HB7 (Grendell-Stewart), which updates probate, guardianship and trust laws; HB87 (Stephens-John), which allows counties to enter longer-term utility supply contracts; SB26 (Hottinger), naming a section of Rt. 93 in Perry County in memory of two fallen Crooksville firefighters, David Theisen and Stephen Carletti; SB40 (Schaffer), which updates the cigarette minimum pricing law; SB49 (Hottinger-Sykes), allowing design professionals to place liens as a payment assurance; and SB128 (Peterson), expanding the scope of Ohio State University's Farm Financial Management Institute.

The House Wednesday sent broadband expansion bill HB2 (Carfagna-Stewart) to Gov. Mike DeWine for his signature after overwhelmingly accepting the Senate amendments to the bill as well as the emergency clause, though funding for the bill is still being worked out through the biennial budget bill process. The House also passed pandemic relief measures SB108 (S. Huffman-Romanchuk) and SB109 (Manning-Rulli), after the latter was amended in House Finance Committee to include an additional \$250 million. Also passing were HB37 (Manning), regarding prescriptions for life-saving medicines, and HB176 (Carfagna-Hall), regarding athletic trainers.

The House Thursday passed the "Business Fairness Act," HB215 (Wilkin), which the bill's sponsor said would level the playing field and prevent the state's picking winners and losers during a pandemic by allowing larger businesses to stay open while others that sell the same items are ordered closed. Also passing were HCR5 (Hall), opposing the "For the People Act" sought by congressional Democrats; HB210 (Stephens), which prevents local governments from limiting use of natural gas and propane; HB172 (Baldrige-O'Brien), lifting the state ban on using fireworks; HB177 (Carfagna-Fraizer), regarding blockchain technology; HB222 (Wilkin-Upchurch), regarding nonprofits affiliated with hospitals; and HB252 (White-Plummer), to enter Ohio into the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact.

In other legislative action, House Government Oversight Committee reported out HB213 (J. Miller-Sheehy), regarding the Honor and Remember flag; House Health Committee reported out HB252 (White-Plummer), regarding the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact; House Transportation and Public Safety Committee reported out road naming bills HB258 (Fowler) and HB263 (Roemer); House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee reported out HB190 (Ginter-A. Miller), regarding war relics; House Commerce and Labor Committee reported out HB68 (Cross-Sweeney), regarding timely payment to contractors, and HB158 (Baldrige), regarding firefighting foam; House State and Local Government Committee reported out HB24 (Sobecki-Sheehy), designating Eugene "Gene" Kranz Day, and HB137 (Upchurch-Blackshear), designating Ohio Tuskegee Airmen Day; Senate Health Committee reported out HB9 (Koehler), to ban sales of dextromethorphan without a prescription to people under age 18; Senate

Transportation Committee reported out SB12 (Brenner), creating a Little Brown Jug license plate; and Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee reported out HB6 (Roemer), changing laws on various professions in response to COVID-19.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

At Monday morning's meeting of the Commission on Infant Mortality, members highlighted African American birth outcomes in Lorain County that have improved considerably over the last 10 years, while in that same time span, the statewide average African American infant mortality rate has remained relatively stagnant. Lorain County Public Health Commissioner Dave Covell credited his county's community health workers and broad coordination efforts for the decrease in deaths, as he presented data collected by his agency.

The attorney general says Ohioans should be wary of "misleading tactics" by over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aid companies that claim false performance results and government approval. Congress legalized OTC hearing aids in 2017. None have been cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), however, and manufacturers do not have to disclose OTC hearing aids are not intended for adults or children with severe hearing loss.

The cost of prescription drugs and efforts to stem the increasing prices for life-sustaining drugs such as insulin were the topic Thursday of a virtual news conference. Representatives from Protect Our Care Ohio and For Our Future Ohio joined with other advocates and State Rep. Allison Russo (D-Columbus) to support passage of federal legislation, the Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act. This federal legislation gives Medicare the power to negotiate with drug companies for lower prices -- "the single most effective measure to bring down drug prices."

HIGHER EDUCATION

A Wood County grand jury has indicted eight individuals for the death of Bowling Green State University (BGSU) student Stone Foltz, who was found unconscious after a fraternity party. Foltz, 20, died early last month after an alleged hazing incident involving alcohol.

Ohio State University (OSU) is planning an individual settlement program to resolve remaining claims of alleged sexual misconduct by university sports doctor Richard Strauss, according to an Associated Press article Tuesday that cited court filings by the university. The program would be offered to plaintiffs in five of the current lawsuits, with an average settlement of up to \$252,000 per person.

John Carroll University (JCU) announced Monday Alan R. Miciak will take over as president effective Tuesday, June 1. Miciak will succeed current President Michael D. Johnson. Miciak has served as the dean of the Boler College of Business at John Carroll since 2015. He will become the university's 26th president.

Ohio State University (OSU) recently unveiled a new program meant to help former students complete their undergraduate education after they've stopped just short of graduation. "Complete Ohio State" aims to support students who return to the university to fulfill their degree requirements after spending time away by providing information and making connections to academic advising and other resources. The program also provides financial assistance for students who meet certain eligibility requirements.

Ohio University's (OU) Voinovich Academy for Excellence in Public Service is building a new initiative meant to improve law enforcement safety and increase community trust with the help of virtual reality. The Appalachian Law Enforcement Initiative is designed to involve entire communities, bringing together law enforcement officers, community stakeholders and public administrators in a collaboration to reduce the use of force, teach de-escalation techniques and improve law enforcement outcomes for both the community and police, the university explained in a release.

Following a five-month search, the Owens Community College Board of Trustees announced Wednesday it has named Dione Somerville as college's new president, effective Tuesday, June 15.

University of Akron (UA) President Gary L. Miller announced that Charles Guthrie has been named director of athletics, effective Thursday, July 1. His appointment is pending approval by the UA Board of Trustees. He replaces Larry Williams, who has served in the position since 2015.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

In observance of National Fair Housing Month and National Reentry Week, the Toledo-based Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) joined the city's Fair Housing Center Friday for an information session on legal protections for ex-felons seeking to reenter their communities and become productive citizens. Participants included CCJC attorney and reentry coordinator Thomas Luettker and the Fair Housing Center's vice president and general counsel, George Thomas, and director of public policy, Sarah Jenkins.

JUDICIAL

Ohioans passing the latest bar exam attended out-of-state law schools by a two-to-one margin, with University of Akron (UA) taking honors for the second straight year among in-state programs at the exam's February administration. In the state's first full adoption of the Uniform Bar Exam and second virtual administration under COVID-19, residents saw their highest pass-rate on the winter test since 2016: 54.3 percent, or 196 successful candidates out of 361 total exam takers, according to the Ohio Supreme Court. The pass-rate was higher for first-time candidates, or 66 percent.

The latest changes to state probate forms take effect Saturday, May 1. They include the following amendments:

- Creates new forms for the release of a decedent's medical records and medical-billing records.

- Updates protective services forms to reflect recent legislative enactments, including those involving the investigation of an alleged abuse of an adult.

- Replaces "mental retardation" with "intellectual disability" in existing forms.

Legislative foes of traffic cameras are hoping the Ohio Supreme Court will do what at least two state appeals courts have so far refused to do: declare the Local Government Fund (LGF) reduction for jurisdictions operating traffic cameras to be within the Legislature's budgetary authority and not a transgression of municipalities' constitutional home rule.

LIBRARIES

While many local government jurisdictions are due for substantial funding from the latest federal COVID relief measure, libraries can apply for grants but won't get direct payments on the scale available to others. The Ohio Library Council (OLC) is urging the Senate to maintain the practice in recent years of boosting libraries' share of state tax receipts, something the executive proposal and House version did not include.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Capital-area electors Tuesday will not be voting on an \$87 million clean energy referendum to "delegate the city's contracting authority to private parties," in the words of the Ohio Supreme Court. Rejecting ProEnergy Ohio's primary bid, it said late Thursday that the petition committee nevertheless had proven Columbus City Council had abused its discretion in rejecting the proposed ordinance last November. Columbus must now approve the ordinance outright -- unlikely -- schedule a special election or place the "Columbus Clean Energy Partnership Fund" on this November's ballot. The city already has adopted an opt-out renewable energy plan with American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio that begins in June.

"There is a better way to define force account work," Ohio Contractors Association (OCA) President Chris Runyan told the Joint Committee on Force Accounts Thursday, gathering with other members of the construction industry to push back on the argument that counties should receive a spending cap increase for in-house labor in order to complete more road, bridge and other projects with government employees.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The so-called "Brood X" cicadas are set to surface in parts of Western and Central Ohio after 17 years underground, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). The cicadas will begin to emerge when the soil, eight inches beneath the ground, reaches 64 degrees Fahrenheit. This typically happens between late April and the middle of May, ODNR said in a news release.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and Keep Ohio Beautiful (KOB) recently hosted the annual "Great Ohio Planting Day," putting native Ohio hardwoods into the ground around Alum Creek State Park's beach area. ODNR and KOB worked together with Columbia Gas of Ohio and NiSource volunteers to beautify and enhance the beach and parking areas at Alum Creek State Park by planting 20 large native trees in honor of Arbor Day, according to a news release from ODNR.

Twenty-three Ohio communities will receive a total of \$578,578 to support local marine patrol units, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). Provided by the ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft, these assistance funds represent a continuing effort to keep Ohio waterways safe and enhance recreational boating experiences, the department said in a news release.

PENSIONS

The Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) announced the selection of Via Benefits offered by Willis Towers Watson to administer the system's Pre-Medicare Connector beginning in 2022. The OPERS Board of Trustees voted in January 2020 to end its group plan for retirees who haven't reached Medicare age starting in 2022, requiring them to use subsidies provided by OPERS to buy coverage on the market.

PEOPLE

The Ohio Conservative Energy Forum (OHCEF), a member of the Conservative Energy Network (CEN), recently announced the hiring of Sarah Spence as executive director. She succeeds Tyler Duvelius, who is now director of external affairs for the Conservative Energy Network.

Ohio Right to Life (ORTL) announced that Jessica Warner, director of legislative affairs at Ohio Right to Life, has left the organization to accept a new position at Heartbeat International. Warner, whose last day was April 23, had been Ohio Right to Life's director of legislative affairs since 2016.

Former Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Amy Acton is one of seven people who will receive a special "Profile in Courage Award" for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic, the John F. Kennedy (JFK) Library Foundation announced Tuesday.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) announced Tuesday that Erik G. Lockhart, the agent-in-charge of the Ohio Investigative Unit, was promoted to senior enforcement commander. The promotion was effective on Nov. 22, 2020, but due to COVID-19 restrictions on large gatherings, OHSP has not been able to hold a traditional promotion ceremony and instead held a virtual ceremony on Tuesday.

The Ohio Legislative Black Caucus (OLBC) recently announced that attorney Steve Tugend had been selected as chair of the caucus' corporate roundtable, which consists of leaders in the public and private sectors. In a release, it cited Tugend's expertise as chair of

Kegler Brown Hill+Ritter Government Affairs.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Members of the Fix Our Roads Ohio coalition voiced their support Monday for new distracted driving legislation, saying it makes an important expansion beyond the current prohibition on texting and allows for enforcement as a primary offense. The bill was introduced Monday afternoon as HB283 by Reps. Cindy Abrams (R-Harrison) and Brian Lampton (R-Beavercreek). Ohio Insurance Institute President Dean Fadel said the bill reflects Gov. Mike DeWine's proposal in the transportation budget, though those provisions had been removed in the House. It also reflects 133-SB285 (O'Brien-Kunze), he said.

In its third meeting since being established by Gov. Mike DeWine last year, the Ohio Traffic Safety Council continued to discuss ways to bring down traffic fatalities in the state after Ohio saw a spike in 2020, including targeting the issue of distracted driving. Dan Fitzpatrick, an assistant policy director in the governor's office, updated the council on HB283 (Abrams-Lampton), which would establish a ban on the use of hand-held devices while driving. Ohio Department of Public Safety Director Tom Stickrath had noted that the DeWine administration including himself had pushed the Legislature to pass such a ban as a part of HB74 (Oelslager), the transportation budget, but lawmakers removed it.

REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT

Without minority party buy-in, a plan to extend constitutional redistricting deadlines is off the table, Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima) said Wednesday, which was the last day lawmakers could have passed a resolution to put the issue on the August special election ballot. Huffman said at the time he wouldn't move forward with the idea if Democrats weren't on board -- and they weren't. Last week House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) and Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) instead suggested asking the Ohio Supreme Court to extend the deadlines. House Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) said it will be difficult to get redistricting done on the current deadline, adding the clearest way to resolve the issue was to move the deadlines in tandem to November, as well as addressing the one-year constitutional requirement of residency. The Ohio Supreme Court can't have jurisdiction yet because there is no violation of the constitution at this point, he noted.

TAXATION

Franklin County Court of Common Pleas Judge Carl Aveni has dismissed a conservative think tank's lawsuit against the state of Ohio and the city of Columbus, finding that the General Assembly had the power to impose the pandemic municipal income tax changes made in 133-HB197 (Powell-Merrin). The Buckeye Institute challenged HB197's withholding provision instructing municipalities to continue withholding municipal income tax at a taxpayer's place of work, even if the taxpayer is currently working from home in a different local jurisdiction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

TECHNOLOGY

The OhioX inaugural Tech Policy Summit featured a series of panel discussions Thursday, in addition to remarks by Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) and Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima). Speakers discussed the role of technology in advancing the state economy and what it provides to government agencies.

UTILITIES

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) followed the Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) March request for full transparency in 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) coal plant subsidies Wednesday by ordering an independent audit of American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio, Duke Energy Ohio and AES Ohio's (formerly DP&L) revenues and customer charge-offs for the Ohio Valley Electric Corporation (OVEC).

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The open enrollment period for Ohio employers to select a managed care organization (MCO) to oversee medical management for workers injured on the job began Monday, May 3, and continues through Friday, May 28. The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) offers open enrollment every two years for employers to select from a network of 10 MCOs that manage claim filings and medical care that injured workers need to recover and return to work.