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**Emergency Management Association of Ohio**

**Legislative Update**

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- HB23**      **CREATE ESCAPED CONVICT ALERT PROGRAM** (ROEMER B, WILLIAMS J) To create the escaped convict alert program.  
*Current Status:* 6/25/2025 - Referred to Committee Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety  
*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:* 7/21/2025 - Consideration of Governor's Veto; House Overrides Veto on Item 66, Vote 61-28  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-96>
- HB309**      **LAW CHANGES-COUNTY FUNDING** (THOMAS D) To modify the law governing county budget commissions, property taxation, and alternative apportionment formulas for local government and public library funds.  
*Current Status:* 6/11/2025 - House Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)  
*State Bill Page:* <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-309>
- HB335**      **LAW CHANGES-COUNTY FUNDING** (THOMAS D) To modify the law governing property taxation, county budget commissions, county sales taxation, and alternative apportionment formulas for local government and public library funds.  
*Current Status:* 6/18/2025 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, House Ways and Means, (First Hearing)  
*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



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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:** 6/18/2025 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means

**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:** 8/13/2025 - Introduced

**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:** 8/25/2025 - Introduced

**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:** 8/25/2025 - Introduced

**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:** 8/25/2025 - Introduced

**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:** 8/28/2025 - Introduced

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



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- 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>

**Friday, Aug. 29, 2025**

### AGRICULTURE

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg) has been awarded a \$1 million grant through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA) Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) to support a new effort to place conservation agronomists within agricultural retail operations in Northwest Ohio. Conservation agronomists will be employed by agricultural retailers and work with local soil and water conservation district (SWCD) staff and farmers in the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB) to implement H2Ohio best management practices (BMPs) that help reduce nutrient runoff, ODAg said. The agronomists will provide one-on-one technical assistance, facilitate training events and on-farm demonstrations, and support nutrient planning and BMP adoption.

### ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

The state budget's "Haslam Law" doesn't change the fact that the Cleveland Browns are in violation of the "Modell Law" as the team plans to move to the suburb of Brook Park, the city of Cleveland argues in a new court filing. "The Browns successfully advocated [for] the General Assembly to amend the Modell Law, an amendment that becomes effective on Sept. 30, 2025. This new law, named after the person pushing for it -- Jimmy Haslam -- changes nothing here," attorney Justin Herdman wrote as part of a motion asking Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court Judge Lauren Moore to grant partial summary judgment to Cleveland and hold the Browns in violation of the Modell Law. "Because the Browns have already violated the Modell Law (R.C. 9.67), the city may vindicate its accrued rights under the Modell Law. The Haslam Law does not retroactively relieve the Browns of their obligations under the Modell Law. Indeed, it cannot be read that way, or else it would violate the Ohio Constitution's prohibition on retroactive laws," Herdman continued, noting the Legislature did not "expressly" make the Haslam Law retroactive.

While the Ohio Humanities Council (OHC) didn't convince the General Assembly to provide state funding to the organization in the FY26-27 budget, OHC Executive Director Rebecca Asmo said the process was encouraging in other ways, and she remains



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optimistic about the future. "It was a tough year anyways, but it's always tough when you're asking for something that's new," Asmo told *Hannah News*. "It was the first time in the organization's 50-plus-year history that we've ever asked. So we made some good inroads in ... name recognition, understanding of what the mission is and the stakeholders that we serve. ... It's a process." In the future, Asmo said, she believes OHC can advocate more effectively by teaming up with more stakeholders -- such as local historical societies -- to speak to lawmakers about the increased need for state funding.

### **ATTORNEY GENERAL**

Attorney General (AG) Dave Yost has been asked to weigh in on the legality of a juvenile probation officer's serving on the board of a school district in which he carries out his professional duties. Wyandot County Prosecutor Eric Figlewicz last week wrote to Yost to request a formal legal opinion regarding a candidate for the Upper Sandusky Exempted Village Schools Board of Education who serves as a probation officer for Wyandot County.

Yost joined a bipartisan coalition of 44 attorneys general in urging leading artificial intelligence (AI) companies to end practices they say put children at risk of exploitation. Their letter was delivered to AI companies that include Anthropic, Apple, Google, Meta, Microsoft, OpenAI, Perplexity AI, and xAI. It stems from a report from Reuters that Meta approved AI bots that can "flirt and engage in romantic roleplay with children" as young as eight years old. "We are uniformly revolted by this apparent disregard for children's emotional well-being and alarmed that AI assistants are engaging in conduct that appears to be prohibited by our respective criminal laws," the attorneys general wrote.

The AG is once again encouraging high school students to apply for the Teen Ambassador Board in academic year 2025-26. Open to young people from public (district and charter) and private schools, including online and home-schooled students, the board allows teens to engage with state government officials and examine issues affecting their lives. Board members serve for one year and convene twice in Columbus to collaborate and advise Yost's office on matters relevant to teens. They participate in small group projects, attend presentations, meet with the attorney general, and interact with assistant attorneys general and elected officials.

### **AUDITOR OF STATE**

Scioto County Commissioner Bryan Davis and his wife were indicted as part of an ongoing investigation into alleged bribes and public contracts involving the Southern Ohio Port Authority and a Portsmouth-area business park, Auditor of State Keith Faber announced. Bryan Davis faces 13 felony counts, including engaging in a pattern of



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corrupt activity; theft in office; money laundering; aggravated theft; tampering with evidence; attempted tampering with evidence; receiving stolen property; forgery; obstructing justice; tampering with records; and filing incomplete, false and fraudulent returns. Lorinda Sue Davis faces 10 felony counts, including engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity; money laundering; tampering with evidence; attempted tampering with evidence; receiving stolen property; forgery; obstructing justice; tampering with records; and filing incomplete, false and fraudulent returns.

### ***IT'S IN THE FY26-27 BUDGET***

It's August with sunshine aplenty, but some public record stakeholders remain dissatisfied with the July 1 budget despite the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association's (OPAA) 11th hour workout with the Ohio Innocence Project (OIP). Chief complaints: protected emails and texts between state lawmakers and staff; ongoing concerns for the wrongly convicted; and continued complaints about an ostensibly non-existent single-subject rule that allowed HB96 to countenance public record changes in the first place.

While many have applauded an OPAA/OIP June compromise embraced by the Senate that backed off April's House public record amendments, others say now-off-limit texts and emails between legislators and staffers are the sort of records that allowed the Ohio press corps and other watchdogs to break open the 134-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) scandal beyond revelations in FirstEnergy's deferred prosecution agreement (DPA).

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/URBAN REVITALIZATION**

The JobsOhio Board of Directors met Thursday at the Great Lakes Science Center in Cleveland, with much of the discussion focusing on expanding the state's presence in the aerospace industry and what can be done to support Northeast Ohio in particular. In his opening comments, Chair Josh Rubin discussed how the center was recently ranked among the top 10 science centers nationally by readers of *USA Today* and houses a "great STEM school." Adding that it is also the visitor center for NASA Glenn Research Center, Rubin discussed what JobsOhio does to support NASA as well as the economic benefits that facility provides to Ohio.

Gov. Mike DeWine's administration announced Monday the approval of assistance for four projects expected to create 233 new jobs and retain 593 jobs statewide. During its monthly meeting, the Ohio Tax Credit Authority (TCA) reviewed economic development proposals brought by JobsOhio and its regional partners. The projects are expected to collectively result in more than \$20 million in new payroll and spur more than \$287 million in investments across Ohio. Projects approved by the TCA, organized by region, include the following:



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- **Ajinomoto Health & Nutrition North America, Inc. (AHN)**, city of Akron (Summit County).
- **Buckeye Construction & Restoration, LTD.**, city of Wellston (Jackson County).
- **Cencora**, city of Harrison (Hamilton County).
- **Danone North America Public Benefit Corporation**, village of Minster (Auglaize County).

Wyandot Snacks announced it would expand its Marion facility, according to One Columbus, bringing \$7.7 million in investments toward plant modernization as well as new machinery and equipment. The expansion is expected to create 67 new jobs and help retain over 260 current positions.

### EDUCATION

The Ohio Supreme Court decided Wednesday not to grant Attorney General Dave Yost's bid to submit additional evidence and request an emergency order from justices to provide transportation in a dispute over busing of private and charter school students living in Columbus City Schools. Yost filed the lawsuit last year against Columbus and its broad use of statutory powers allowing it to deem transportation of school choice students "impractical" and pay parents in lieu of providing busing. A similar lawsuit was filed on behalf of a Columbus parent by the Ohio Christian Education Network. Yost argued then and now that the law compels Columbus to provide busing to any family that disputes the "impractical" designation and requests mediation. Justices last year had denied Yost's request that they order Columbus to transport the students of these families in mediation.

### ELECTIONS

Two groups have filed a federal lawsuit challenging a proof of citizenship requirement tucked in the transportation budget for Ohio residents who register to vote through the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV). Red Wine & Blue and the Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans filed the lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, naming Secretary of State Frank LaRose and Ohio Registrar Charles Norman as defendants. The lawsuit argues the provision added to HB54 (Stewart) that requires an applicant to provide "unspecified, additional proof of United States citizenship" before they are offered the opportunity to register to vote at the Ohio BMV will make it harder for "many lawful, eligible Ohio citizens to exercise their fundamental right to vote." Until the passage of the transportation budget, the groups said in the lawsuit, Ohio residents were offered the opportunity to register to vote when applying for a driver's license or



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identification card at the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles and the applicant was required to attest under the penalty of perjury that they are a citizen of the U.S. The budget provision changed that to add the new additional proof of citizenship requirement.

The Ohio Elections Commission Thursday discussed an advisory opinion that would allow campaigns to pay for security expenses but delayed adoption of the opinion until its next meeting. The opinion was solicited by Stacey Hauff, an attorney with McTigue and Colombo. Commission Executive Director Phil Richter had submitted a draft version to commissioners that would have generally allowed for the expense under certain circumstances, including the existence of a concrete threat to the candidate or public official, and not just the fact that the candidate wanted to spend money for certain security improvements.

### **ELECTIONS 2026**

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- The campaign of U.S. Sen. Jon Husted (R-OH) announced the endorsement of the Northwest Ohio Building & Construction Trades Council.
- The gubernatorial campaign of Democrat Amy Acton announced the endorsements of actor Ed O'Neill; Rep. Lauren McNally (D-Youngstown); former Ohio Sen. Bob Hagan; former Rep. Michele Lepore-Hagan; Warren City Treasurer and former Rep. Tom Letson; Youngstown Municipal Clerk of Courts Richard Vince Hill; Youngstown City Council members Anita Davis, Pat Kelly, and Julius Oliver; Youngstown City School Board member Brenda Kimble; Nurses for America; Sen. Hearcel Craig (D-Columbus); Rep. Christine Cockley (D-Columbus); Rep. Anita Somani (D-Dublin); Rep. Derrick Hall (D-Akron); Summit County Clerk of Courts and former Rep. Tavia Galonski; Sen. Casey Weinstein (D-Dublin); former Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko; Akron Municipal Clerk of Courts Sandra Kurt; Cuyahoga Falls Councilman Frank Stams; Portage County Treasurer John Kennedy; former Ohio Education Association President Becky Higgins; and former Supreme Court Justice Bill O'Neill.
- The campaign of Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Sherrod Brown announced the endorsement of the United Association of Union Plumbers and Pipefitters; and the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers

### **ENERGY/UTILITIES**

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) was wrong to allow Dayton Power & Light (DP&L) to offset excessive profits through capital investments rather than return money to customers, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled unanimously. The Office of the Ohio



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Consumers' Counsel (OCC) filed an appeal after the PUCO determined DP&L's electric security plan (ESP) resulted in significantly excessive earnings for 2018 and 2019 but could avoid refunding \$61 million in excess earnings to customers because of its future capital commitments of more than \$200 million for smart grid upgrades. Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy wrote the opinion, pointing out that offsets are not mentioned in the law, which also does not authorize the PUCO to allow utilities to keep their excessive earnings.

### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE**

Seven Democrats expressed interest in being appointed to the open Ohio House District 26 seat by the Friday, Aug. 22 deadline, according to the House Democratic Caucus. The seat became vacant after Rep. Sedrick Denson (D-Cincinnati) resigned to pursue other opportunities. According to the caucus, the applicants include the following:

- Kyle Dallman, a full-time employee of the Hamilton County Board of Elections.
- Brent Edwards, a former campaign manager for former Rep. Jessica Miranda and the current state director for RuralOrganizing.org.
- Craig Erickson, a physician who serves patients with developmental disabilities and former Republican who switched parties a decade ago.
- Lisa Kuan, a developmental pediatrician.
- Erik Topham, an organizer and entrepreneur.
- Sam Bowling, a Norwood city councilwoman.
- Ashley Bryant Bailey, a consultant who had previously launched a campaign for the seat.

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) will commemorate the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 with a memorial flag display on the West Lawn of the Statehouse. A short program will begin Monday, Sept. 8 at 5:15 p.m. on the west steps of the Statehouse and will feature remarks from state officials. After the program, volunteers from across Central Ohio will install the 2,977 flags that comprise the memorial. The flags represent the 2,977 victims of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and United Airlines Flight 93. When seen from above, the design represents the World Trade Center towers, with a space in the shape of the Pentagon and an open strip representing the field in Pennsylvania. The memorial will be open to the public from 7 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 8 until 12 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 12.





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### **GOVERNOR**

Gov. Mike DeWine's office announced he has appointed Christopher McDowell to the Hamilton County Common Pleas Court, General Division, to succeed Judge Tom Heekin, who retired. McDowell will serve the remainder of the term and run for election in November 2026. McDowell has served as a law clerk for Chief Justice Richard F. Neely of the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals and a judge advocate general in the U.S. Army. He is currently a partner with the law firm Strauss Troy and is a prosecutor for the city of Wyoming and village of Newtown.

### **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff emphasized the importance of vaccines as children head back to school during a virtual press conference Tuesday, noting the number of incoming kindergartners who met all vaccine requirements fell from 89.9 percent in the 2019-2020 school year to 85.4 percent in 2024-2025. That left "thousands" of kindergartners vulnerable to diseases these vaccines are meant to protect against, he continued. Vanderhoff pointed to outbreaks of measles at the national level as an example of vaccine-preventable illness, while Ohio only had 35 cases this year. Of them, 33 were people who had not been vaccinated and the other two had an unknown vaccine status.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION**

A new advertisement highlighting the "positive impact of Big Ten universities in their communities and across the nation" will begin airing during this week's season-opening football games, the conference announced Wednesday. The 30-second TV ad -- entitled "We Are Here" -- focuses on how Big Ten universities aim to make America healthier, safer and more prosperous by discovering new medical treatments, developing healthier foods and driving economic growth, among other efforts. Collectively, the 18 members of the Big Ten Conference educate more than 817,000 students and conduct \$19.6 billion in research each year, the organization said. "The vast majority of that research is conducted thanks to the American people and their support for federal investments in the nation's global leadership in health and innovation."

For the third consecutive year, the Ohio State University (OSU) Department of Athletics has received the "Play to Zero Waste Champion Award" from the Green Sports Alliance (GSA). The award honors sports organizations that demonstrate outstanding commitment to reducing environmental impacts through waste diversion and operational sustainability, OSU said. OSU achieved an average waste diversion rate of more than 90 percent across all home football games at Ohio Stadium during the 2024 season, maintaining its "Zero Waste Stadium" status. The diversion rate reflects the percentage of



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waste materials that were composted, recycled, or donated instead of being sent to landfills.

### **INTEL**

At a Friday afternoon news conference, President Donald Trump said that Intel's CEO had agreed to give a 10 percent stake in the company to the United States. While taking questions from reporters, the president said he'd recently met with the CEO of Intel, Lip-Bu Tan, and asked him for the 10 percent stake.

### **JUDICIAL**

Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy unveiled the Ohio Supreme Court's new "Women in Law" Exhibit Tuesday in the visitor education wing of the Ohio Judicial Center, a celebration formally marking the relocation of former Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor's life-size portrait from the Court's Grand Concourse. Attended by hundreds of members of the legal community and other well-wishers, the event recognized the Court's female members past and present and other prominent women who have represented Ohio's legal community. They include the nation's first state-level justice, Florence Ellinwood Allen, who served the Court between 1922-1934 and the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals from 1934 to 1959. The chief honored Allen's place in the vanguard of women admitted to the Ohio bar and noted only Justice Allen and former Justice Blanche Ethel Krupansky, who sat on the Court between 1981-83 and previously served the Cleveland Municipal Court, Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court and 8th District Appeals Court, had died out of 14 female members of the Ohio Supreme Court. Of 12 surviving female justices, the celebration also was attended by sitting Justices Jennifer Brunner (2021-present) and Megan Shanahan (2025-present) and former Justices Evelyn Lundberg Stratton (1996-2012), Yvette McGee Brown (2011-12), Judith French (2013-21), Mary DeGenaro (2018-19) and Melody Stewart (2019-25).

By rule, Ohio attorneys must register with the Supreme Court of Ohio's Registration and Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Section on or before Sept. 1 in each odd-numbered year for the next two years. The Ohio attorney registration process must be completed online and includes an electronic bar license, which can be stored on an attorney's phone for easy access or printed out as needed. Cards will be issued via email. The registration fee for active, corporate and military spouse attorneys is now \$450.

After seven years and the bulk of the succeeding gubernatorial administration, Kasich-era litigation over disclosure of pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) pricing practices went the industry's way this month. Judge Andrew Miller of Franklin County Common Pleas Court determined that specified information in a report from HealthPlan Data Solutions constituted trade secrets and should not be released by the Ohio Department of Medicaid



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(ODM). Miller issued an order enjoining ODM from releasing or disclosing information included in proposed redactions filed under seal with the judge by CaremarkPCS Health. The dispute dates to the summer of 2018, when ODM released the executive summary of the report, which found an 8.8 percent difference between the amount PBMs were paying pharmacies and what they were billing Medicaid, indicative of controversial spread pricing practices drawing lawmaker and administration scrutiny at the time.

Attorney General Dave Yost should have to testify as to his justifications for filing litigation seeking the ouster of two State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) trustees, the two trustees argue in a new motion. Yost filed litigation in the spring of 2024 to remove Rudy Fichtenbaum and Wade Steen, on the same day Fichtenbaum and board supporters succeeded in booting a prior board chair and elevating Fichtenbaum to the position. The trustees argue that Yost accused them of fiduciary breach upon the filing but months later said he was simply investigating to determine if anything improper happened. "Only General Yost can answer why the charges were brought and why they were seemingly modified if not withdrawn. For that reason, defendants ask that the court determine that they have the right to call General Yost as a witness in their case to respond to these issues and others," the motion states.

### **LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**

Lt. Gov. Jim Tressel teamed up with former Ohio State University (OSU) and NFL wide receiver Ted Ginn Jr. Wednesday to promote his fitness challenge at a Columbus middle school, part of a series of similar events held this week around the state targeting students in grades 4-8. Also present at Johnson Park Middle School were Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff, Sen. Hearcel Craig (D-Columbus), Reps. Latyna Humphrey (D-Columbus) and Dontavius Jarrells (D-Columbus), and former OSU and NFL player Antonio Pittman, now a Columbus firefighter. Tressel expounded on the program's focus on fitness, nutrition and sleep during an assembly-style forum that led to exercise demonstrations by youth volunteers, Ginn, Vanderhoff, the legislators and other staff from the governor and lieutenant governor's offices. Students will fill out a paper workbook to track their progress, and Tressel discussed how other athletes will be joining in through YouTube videos. Roy Hall, another retired OSU and NFL player, will be helping at Johnson Park specifically. The challenge will officially begin on Monday, Sept. 8 for the 635 schools that have opted into the program. More information is available [HERE](#).

### **MARIJUANA/HEMP**

All natural and synthetic kratom compounds should be designated as "illegal drugs," Gov. Mike DeWine said Monday. "These modified kratom products, sold online and in stores, are essentially legal, over-the-counter opiates that anyone -- including kids -- can



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buy with just a few bucks," DeWine said. "There is no accepted medical use for kratom in Ohio, and it is an imminent public health risk," the governor continued. "The Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) should act with urgency to schedule all kratom compounds and future alterations of them as Schedule I illegal drugs." Kratom, a plant native to Southeast Asia, is not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for consumption or medical use. However, it is often marketed for its purported ability to treat chronic pain, opioid dependence, opioid withdrawal, anxiety, depression and other disorders. Products are sold online and in stores in various forms, including powders, pills, gummies and beverages. An emergency meeting of the Ohio Board of Pharmacy to address the proposal set for Wednesday, however was cancelled.

### MENTAL HEALTH

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) announced the awarding of a \$1.2 million grant to Youth to Youth International, a program of CompDrug, to serve as the lead organization for the newly established Ohio Youth-Led Collective. "This investment reflects our commitment to supporting young people as leaders in prevention, their schools, and their communities. The Ohio Youth-Led Collective is an exciting new way to make that happen," said OhioMHAS Director LeeAnne Cornyn. The Ohio Youth-Led Collective will build and sustain a coordinated, statewide infrastructure that advances youth-led prevention efforts to address substance use and suicide among young people, OhioMHAS explained.

### NATURAL RESOURCES

Ohio's Girl Scouts, along with their troops, families and friends, are invited to a statewide celebration of adventure, hands-on learning and unforgettable memories as the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) will host special events at 12 Ohio state parks during the seventh annual Girl Scouts Love State Parks weekend from Friday, Sept. 12 through Sunday, Sept. 14. Activities led by ODNR naturalists will give participants a chance to try new outdoor recreation experiences while gaining a deeper appreciation for nature and conservation.

ODNR has been recognized among the top natural resources communicators throughout the United States and Canada. The Association for Conservation Information recently presented ODNR's Division of Wildlife with the following six awards:

- **Wild Ohio Magazine:** First place, magazine category
- **Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp:** First place, one-time publication category



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- **Form and Function, Ohio's Various Bird Nests:** First place, magazine wildlife article category
- **Ohio's World of Wildlife K-2 Identification Guide:** Second place, education category
- **Wild Ohio Calendar:** Third place, calendar category
- **Warblers of Ohio Field Guide:** Third place, book/report publication category

ODNR confirmed Wednesday that the number of cases of epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) is increasing throughout the state. As of Wednesday, the large majority of deer reported dead or sick from EHD in Ohio were clustered in the southeastern corner of the state, including the following counties: Athens, Washington, Morgan, Meigs, Monroe and Guernsey. In addition to the outsized number of deer found positive for EHD, those counties also have confirmed EHD-positive free-ranging deer. Other counties with confirmed EHD-positive free-ranging deer include Fairfield, Ross, Union and Morrow counties. The above list of counties remained the same compared to numbers released by ODNR on Aug. 19, though the number of cases in those counties is increasing. Townships in more than 10 previously unaffected counties have reported new instances of deer reported dead or sick from EHD, though none of those counties report EHD-positive free-ranging deer.

Pleasant Valley Wildlife Area, located northwest of Chillicothe, stands today as a bucolic reserve especially known for birding and hunting opportunities. But more than 100 years ago, the area bustled with more than 1,000 buildings used to house and train the earliest recruits in America's efforts in World War I. ODNR recently dedicated a new historical marker there to honor the former location of Camp Sherman, opened in September 1917 as one of 16 U.S. Army training centers at the time. Similar Army cantonments were scattered throughout the U.S., from the east coast as far west as Texas. In addition to barracks, each cantonment had administration buildings, a hospital, railroad tracks, and in many cases, a power station.

## NEWS MEDIA

Nexstar Media Group, Inc. (NBC4) and TEGNA Inc. (WBNS/Channel 10) announced that they entered into a definitive agreement whereby, subject to regulatory approvals, Nexstar will acquire all outstanding shares of TEGNA for \$22 per share in a cash transaction valued at \$6.2 billion, inclusive of TEGNA's net debt and estimated transaction fees and expenses. In Cleveland, according to Cleveland.com, it brings together Fox affiliate WJW with NBC affiliate WKYC. The *Washington Post* (WaPo) reports that this merger "would probably be illegal under current FCC [Federal Communications Commission] regulations." The merger would put Nexstar "at the



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ownership cap that has governed nationwide TV station ownership for decades. ... The deal could also violate existing limits on local ownership markets ...." However, WaPo notes, "The Trump administration appears set to approve the deal, altering regulations in a way that would change how many Americans around the country get their news."

### **PENSIONS**

The Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund's (OP&F) investments performed better than almost all public pension funds in the country in FY25, despite a relatively lower allocation to the recently surging U.S. stock market, investment advisers told the fund's board Wednesday. OP&F investment staff, meanwhile, reported that system assets now exceed \$20 billion and set an all-time daily high this week of more than \$20.1 billion. The Investment Committee of the OP&F Board of Trustees heard from Craig Morton and David Lindbergh of Wilshire Associates, outside investment consultant for the system. OP&F's investment performance was 13.9 percent for the year that ended June 30. Morton and Lindbergh said that puts OP&F near the very top of hundreds of peer funds, with returns in the second percentile, roughly 3 percent better than median returns. Lindbergh said other funds with high returns are doing so through investing a substantially greater proportion of assets into domestic equities than OP&F does.

### **PEOPLE**

Philip E. Cole, executive director of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies (OACAA), will retire at the end of August after more than three decades of service, the association said Friday. OACAA said it has begun a leadership transition, with Jason C. Smith as the new executive director. Cole has led OACAA since 1989, representing Ohio's 48 community action agencies. OACAA said he has served as a relentless champion for individuals and families living in poverty during that time.

There are "terrifying" reasons that "Sesame Street" street characters like Big Bird, Elmo, Cookie Monster, Oscar the Grouch, and the Count are viewed as the "enemy" by those currently in power, according to Rev. William Barber. "In the world of authoritarianism and neofascism ... the Count is an enemy because the Count on Sesame Street teaches you that people have taught you to fear what doesn't need to be feared. And that everything that bumps in the dark and that's different is not your enemy," Barber said during a City Club of Cleveland event on Friday. "And attacking Oscar ... Oscar is trying to teach us that even somebody in a garbage can have witness," he continued. "Even somebody living on the street can have wisdom, and they don't need to have their tents folded up and them run out of D.C. or run out of Cleveland. What we ought to be doing is listening to them, what their reality says about the need for housing, health care and justice for all people." The U.S. is currently experiencing a "lethal combination" of both authoritarianism and fascism, Barber said.



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The Associated Builders and Contractors of Ohio (ABC) recently appointed Griffin Weasel as vice president of government affairs and communications. He joins Bryan C. Williams on ABC's Ohio state lobbying team. Weasel brings extensive experience in state government, public affairs and campaign strategy to the position. He will largely focus on promoting pending legislation including the Fair and Open Competition Act (FOCA) and a prevailing wage reform bill. He previously served as an LSC Fellow in the Ohio House Republican Caucus from 2020-2021 and has held roles with the Ohio Treasurer of State, TAG Strategies, and McCaul for Congress (TX).

### **POLLS/STUDIES**

U.S. Sen. Jon Husted (R-OH) has the early edge in his matchup with former U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), according to a new poll from Emerson College. Husted is leading Brown 49.5 percent to 43.7 percent, with the rest being undecided. In a hypothetical gubernatorial election between entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy (R) and former Ohio Department of Health Director Amy Acton (D), Ramaswamy leads 48.7 percent to 39.4 percent, with 11.8 percent undecided. In a potential matchup against former U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan (D-Niles), Ramaswamy leads 48.8 percent to 41 percent, with 10.2 percent undecided. Gov. Mike DeWine's approval rating is 32.3 percent, with 40.2 percent disapproving and 27.5 percent neutral or unsure. President Donald Trump has a 49.2 percent approval rating, with 41.8 percent disapproving and 9 percent neutral or unsure.

A Quinnipiac University Polling Institute national survey released Wednesday shows a majority of respondents oppose President Donald Trump's decision to send National Guard troops to Washington, D.C., in an effort to reduce crime. Respondents oppose the decision to deploy National Guard troops 56 percent to 41 percent, with a wide partisan and gender difference. Republicans support 86 percent to 12 percent the decision, while 93 percent of Democrats and 61 percent of independent voters oppose it. Fifty percent of male respondents support the decision and 47 percent oppose it, while 63 percent of women oppose it. "Posting the National Guard in D.C. to fight local crime gets faint support, with independent voters giving the deployment a big thumbs down," Quinnipiac University polling analyst Tim Malloy said. Trump's approval rating dropped in the latest Quinnipiac Poll, with 37 percent approving of the way he is handling his job, while 55 percent disapprove. A July Quinnipiac survey found 40 percent of respondents approving and 54 percent disapproving. Eighty-four percent of Republicans approve, while 98 percent of Democrats and 58 percent of independent voters disapprove.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY**

Left-leaning groups in the state capital are working to put a "non-police public safety plan" on the city's May 2026 ballot, its campaign co-chair told the Columbus



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Metropolitan Club (CMC) Wednesday as part of a larger discussion on "Transforming Crisis Care in Central Ohio." Chana Wiley of the Columbus Safety Collective Campaign (CSCC), funded by organizations including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio, Ohio Families Unite for Political Action and Change (OFUPAC), Ohio Organizing Collaborative (OOC) and Ohio Voice (OV), joined a speakers' panel including Columbus City Councilmember Melissa Green, CEO Erika Clark Jones of the Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health (ADAMH) Board of Franklin County and CEO/Medical Director Brian Stroh of Netcare, and led by medical business and health care reporter Samantha Hendrickson of the *Columbus Dispatch*. Wiley said 80 percent of Central Ohio respondents to a CSCC survey say they want a first-responder crisis team that doesn't include police officers.

### SECRETARY OF STATE

If state and federal efforts to get rid of voting machines and return to hand-counting of paper ballots were to succeed, election results would take much longer to come out and accuracy would likely suffer due to normal human error, Secretary of State Frank LaRose and election officials say. The Coalition of Concerned Voters of Ohio is backing efforts in at least two counties that would put local questions on the November ballot asking if voting machines should continue to be used in those counties. The Seneca and Monroe county boards of elections have blocked the issue for now after LaRose issued an advisory saying that while Ohio law allows local ballot issues on the adoption of voting machines, it does not allow for the repeal of the use of voting machines that were already adopted, years before those petition efforts were underway. The coalition is currently going through an administrative appeal of those decisions in those two counties. LaRose acknowledged concerns about voting machines in an interview with *Hannah News*, and said he sincerely believes that a voting machine should not be the sole and final word on election results. In Ohio, he pointed to the fact that every vote cast, whether through a touch screen or filling in a bubble on a ballot, is recorded on paper that a voter can verify before the ballot is cast.

### STATE GOVERNMENT

All Controlling Board members except Sen. Shane Wilkin (R-Hillsboro) held a request on Monday's agenda from the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) to contract with Washington, D.C.-based Mercer Health and Benefits for managed care external quality review services. The request totaled nearly \$13 million in FY26 and nearly \$17 million in FY27. Sen. Steve Huffman (R-Tipp City), sitting in Monday's meeting in place of Sen. Jerry Cirino (R-Kirtland), questioned why Mercer was the one company chosen by ODM to fulfill the contract doing work that needs done by every state to fulfill federal requirements. Adam Landefeld of ODM explained that the external quality review services the contract calls for is a very niche area of work, done by only 12 companies





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nationally, six of which only operate in one state. ODM Deputy Legal Counsel Alyson Miles added that other states aren't necessarily able to request a waiver of bidding on such services, and that is tied to how the federal program is set up. The item was approved without objection.

The Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) is urging Ohio customers of Fortress Trust to divest from the money transmitter by Sunday, Sept. 7. Fortress Trust recently announced it will cease operations in Ohio next month. As of July 2025, the platform had nearly 450 accounts held by Ohioans, the department says, with funds totaling over \$700,000. DOC's Division of Financial Institutions notes, however, any funds not transferred to a new account by the September deadline will not be lost.

### TAXATION

The property tax working group crafting reform proposals ended its Thursday meeting with a spirited and wide-ranging discussion on how to navigate legislative resistance to financing property tax relief at the state level, the specter of a statewide ballot issue to abolish property taxes entirely, and the feasibility of cutting tax bills by consolidating local jurisdictions. Gov. Mike DeWine formed the working group upon his issuance of a handful of budget vetoes to delete property tax proposals enacted by lawmakers in HB96 (Stewart). He said the changes presented too much of a challenge for schools in the aggregate and asked the working group to devise reform ideas by the end of September.

Rep. Gary Click (R-Vickery) this week introduced three bills which he has dubbed the "Taxpayer Freedom Trilogy" -- three measures addressing "the property tax crisis in Ohio." They include the following:

- **HB420** (Click-Willis) - "Discontinuing the Continuum"
- **HB421** (Click-D. Thomas) - "Arresting the Inside Millage"
- **HB422** (Click-Newman) - "The Triumph of the Taxpayer"

### VETERANS

Ohio military veterans argued Monday that the deployment of Ohio National Guard personnel to Washington, D.C. is a misuse of the military that threatens morale and readiness. Gov. Mike DeWine recently send 150 Ohio National Guard military police personnel to Washington at the request of the Trump administration. Dan Maurer, a veteran of the Army JAG Corps and Ohio Northern University law professor, said during a virtual press conference that President Donald Trump has the power to deploy the D.C. guard and to request support from states like Ohio, but is only supposed to use them in



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cases of true emergencies -- "an exigent situation, where normal, local authorities are hamstrung by a lack of resources or are utterly overrun." Maurer said the law enforcement purposes for which these personnel are being deployed don't fit that bill, and he noted that there are multiple cities in Ohio and other states whose guards have been deployed to D.C. that have higher crime rates than D.C.

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) on Friday approved a 1 percent rate decrease beginning Jan. 1, 2026, for public employers in a move Gov. Mike DeWine called "a direct result of [employers'] hard work and focus on safety." The decrease was first proposed at July's BWC board meeting. BWC says the rate reduction has a projected annual premium decrease of approximately \$1.8 million. The cut announced Friday follows a 6 percent rate cut for private employers that took effect on July 1, 2025, which the bureau says saves employers \$60 million.

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