



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

Emergency Management Association of Ohio

Legislative Update

Prepared by: Michelle Fitzgibbon

Phone: (614) 378-2156

E-mail: michelle@fitzgibbongroup.com

Report created on October 3, 2025

- HB23** **CREATE ESCAPED CONVICT ALERT PROGRAM** (ROEMER B, WILLIAMS J) To create the escaped convict alert program.
Current Status: 10/8/2025 - Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety, (Second Hearing)
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: 10/8/2025 - House Ways and Means, (Fourth Hearing)
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: 9/30/2025 - House Technology and Innovation, (First 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.



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

Current Status: 10/8/2025 - House Ways and Means, (Third 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 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: 10/7/2025 - House Technology and Innovation, (First Hearing)

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

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



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

prohibit trespass and types of unauthorized recording with an unmanned aerial vehicle system.

Current Status: 9/15/2025 - Referred to Committee House Transportation

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: 10/1/2025 - Referred to Committee House Local Government

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: 10/8/2025 - House Public Insurance and Pensions, (First Hearing)

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

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: 10/1/2025 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means

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

ABORTION/REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Ohio Planned Parenthood health centers could follow Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin's strategy to continue serving Medicaid patients under the federal "One Big Beautiful Bill" law and his proposed legislation at the state level, Rep. Adam Mathews (R-Lebanon) said Tuesday. Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin's strategy, at least temporarily, is to stop



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

providing abortion services at its facilities in that state, according to media reports. Mathews discussed the issue with members of the House Medicaid Committee during the question-and-answer portion of his sponsor testimony on HB410 (Mathews-Schmidt), which he provided alongside co-sponsor Rep. Jean Schmidt (R-Loveland). Under HB410, certain abortion providers would be prohibited from participating in the Medicaid program.

Medication abortion services will now be provided at the Planned Parenthood Mansfield Health Center, Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio (PPGOH) announced Tuesday. "We're proud to expand medication abortion services to our Mansfield Health Center, ensuring patients in the community -- and those traveling from neighboring areas and other states -- can access the care they need," PPGOH President and CEO Erica Wilson-Domer said in a news release.

The number of individuals traveling to Ohio to obtain an abortion increased by 13.1 percent in 2024, according to the Ohio Department of Health's (ODH) annual abortion report. Non-residents obtained 3,133 abortions in 2024, up from 2,771 in 2023. The number of non-resident abortions increased by 115.3 percent in 2023 compared to 2022. This followed Ohio voters' approval of a reproductive/abortion rights constitutional amendment in November 2023.

Anti-abortion advocates were expected to gather at the Statehouse on Friday, Oct. 3 to call for "pro-life protections in state law," the Center for Christian Virtue (CCV) announced Thursday. Representatives from CCV, March for Life, Right to Life Action Coalition of Ohio and others were to provide remarks at a rally at 11 a.m. on the Statehouse West Lawn, CCV said in a news release.

IT'S IN THE FY26-27 BUDGET

Ohioans can now utilize test strips for more drugs to reduce the risk of overdose, Gov. Mike DeWine announced Thursday. DeWine signed an executive order allowing for the emergency adoption of an Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) rule exempting the following drugs from the definition of "drug paraphernalia" under Ohio law:

- Xylazine
- Medetomidine
- Benzimidazole-opioids (commonly referred to as nitazenes)
- Benzodiazepine and benzodiazepine-related compounds



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

The rule is made possible due to language in budget law HB96 (Stewart) allowing OBP to exempt certain instruments from the definition of "drug paraphernalia" if OBP determines that the instrument demonstrates efficacy in reducing drug poisoning by determining the presence of a specific compound or group of compounds.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) could have done nothing to prevent the inmate beating death of 62-year-old Officer Andrew Lansing at Ross Correctional Institution (RCI) on Christmas Day 2024 in light of administration policies effective at the time. The recently released Lansing report finds his 27-year-old accused murderer, repeat violent offender Rashawn Cannon, was "appropriately placed" at RCI as a medium Level 3 risk for pistol-whipping a woman after previously doing time at the same security level for armed robbery with a gun. RCI had decided to keep him at Level 3 two months before Cannon attacked and killed Lansing, a 24-year department veteran and former member of the U.S. armed services.

A schoolteacher, a former police officer, an orthodox priest and an attorney are among those charged in Ohio's statewide human trafficking sting along with 11 dozen other individuals including registered sex offenders and those accused as fentanyl dealers, peddlers of child obscenity and more. Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost's Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission (OOCIC) led last week's statewide, inter-agency "Operation Next Door" in partnership with more than 100 federal, state and local partners in urban, suburban and rural areas, including regional human trafficking and major crime task forces, county sheriffs and local police, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Border Patrol.

DEATH PENALTY

Attorney General Dave Yost again appeared before lawmakers Wednesday to urge passage of legislation that would add nitrogen hypoxia to the list of execution methods that Ohio would allow, saying that by inaction, the state has taken a "dishonorable abdication of responsibility." "It is not the product of the General Assembly. It is the action and inactions of multiple players," Yost told the House Judiciary Committee during testimony on HB36 (Stewart) Wednesday. But they have the means to correct it, he added.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/URBAN REVITALIZATION

The DeWine administration recently announced six Ohio projects had received funding through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) "Investments Supporting



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

Partnerships In Recovery Ecosystems" (INSPIRE) initiative, which helps to connect people in recovery to workforce training, career opportunities and wraparound supports to help them succeed. The total funding amounted to \$11 million for 32 projects in nine states, with Ohio receiving the highest total amount at \$2.1 million for this year's round. The projects are intended to expand workforce training and career pathways; strengthen recovery ecosystems; develop workforce pipeline programs for in-demand fields such as health care; and support new research to better connect recovery housing to workforce needs.

The Ohio Chamber of Commerce hosted a presentation Thursday on how data centers have grown in Ohio during recent years and what is needed to sustain that growth, with Ohio Chamber Research Foundation Executive Director Demetrius Thomas opening discussion on a report prepared by SRC EvalMetrics LLC. He said the report confirms that Ohio has "emerged as the Midwest breakout star in the digital economy," attracting over \$40 billion in private capital investment in less than a decade. That has placed Ohio in the "top-tier" for digital infrastructure and earned the "Silicon Heartland" title, Thomas continued. He added Columbus ranked fourth globally in data center markets by operational capacity.

TourismOhio's 2025 Ohio Fall Events Guide curates five events from each of Ohio's 88 counties for a total of 440 autumnal affairs, sorted by region within Ohio, including Northeast, Central, Southeast, Southwest and Northwest. The guide is available [HERE](#). The guide lists fall events in each region chronologically. As pumpkin picking and trick-or-treating approach, events in each region are listed through the end of October including the favorite fright fests of Halloween and into the beginning of November.

ECONOMY

The Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) announced Tuesday that Ohio's minimum wage is scheduled to increase to \$11 per hour for non-tipped employees and \$5.50 per hour for tipped employees effective Jan. 1, 2026.

EDUCATION

Honesty for Ohio Education Coalition announced Friday the launch of its "Diversity Ban" toolkit for educators in response to SB113 (Brenner) and HB155 (Lear-Williams), legislation that would prohibit diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in public schools if enacted. The toolkit urges educators and community members to "take action" by contacting local school boards, superintendents and state legislators to "stop the diversity ban." It was created in partnership with the Columbus Education Justice Coalition (CEJC), Kaleidoscope Youth Center (KYC), League of United Latin American Citizens



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

(LULAC) and Applied Academic Solutions (AAS) along with several other Ohio organizations.

The Ohio Supreme Court has punted on a final interpretation of the maximum school bond repayment period in R.C. 133.18(F)(1) but says the Clark County auditor for now cannot refuse to authorize Springfield City Schools' \$8 million bond and 2.2 mill debt levy for the current tax year, even if the 2031 maturity date is six years beyond the 2013 ballot limit of a "maximum period of 12 years." The reason, the unanimous Court opinion states, is that Auditor Hillary Hamilton's oversight of annual tax lists and duplicates is only a "ministerial" function, and that R.C. 133 allows the school district's original, \$14 million bond proposal to be split into two "series" and to be delayed, in total or in part, for six years beyond the initial ballot issue.

The America 250-Ohio Commission's Education Committee has several upcoming events for teachers to learn more about state history, with the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) promoting those initiatives. The Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism (ServeOhio) is partnering with the America 250-Ohio efforts to encourage young people to address "the challenges in their communities with creativity and resilience," comparing them to leaders of the American Revolution.

Gov. Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Bruce Vanderhoff toured the Reynoldsburg High School Livingston Campus' school-based health and vision center on Tuesday as the administration continues preparations for the new OhioSEE program. "What we see in this clinic is frankly, so very impressive," DeWine said during remarks after the tour, joined by Vanderhoff, Reynoldsburg City Schools Superintendent Tracy Reed, Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) Director Stephen Dackin, Sen. Michele Reynolds (R-Canal Winchester) and Rep. Meredith Lawson-Rowe (D-Reynoldsburg).

Officials this week previewed their work to fulfill a budget mandate to meld English language arts and social studies content for an integrated curriculum, which is being done in concert with efforts to recognize the U.S. Semiquincentennial in Ohio. DEW convened one of its regular public hearings Tuesday, a requirement stemming from its separation from the State Board of Education, which once oversaw the agency and incorporated reviews of its rule development and policy work into monthly public board meetings. Among hearing presenters were Paul LaRue, president of the State Board of Education and co-chair of the America 250Ohio Education Committee, and Sherry Birchem, administrator in DEW's Office of Academic Success. Birchem discussed initial work on a "source set" for Ohio icons and American stories as part of the provision in HB96 for DEW to develop an integrated model curriculum encompassing English language arts, social studies and civic education.



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

Jim Otte was recently named as the new chairman of the Broadcast Educational Media Commission (BEMC) by Gov. Mike DeWine effective Friday, Sept. 26, 2025, replacing former BEMC Chairman Matt Dole. Otte has served as a BEMC commissioner since his appointment by DeWine in July 2023, most recently serving as the chair of the Engineering and Broadcast Operations Committee.

ELECTIONS

Secretary of State Frank LaRose Monday announced James Wernecke, a long-time state trooper and investigator, to lead the Ohio Election integrity Commission, the new entity set up in the secretary of state's office to take over for the Ohio Elections Commission, which was eliminated by lawmakers in biennial budget bill HB96 (Stewart). The secretary of state's office said Wernecke will serve as the administrator of the Ohio Election Integrity Commission when it begins operations on Jan. 1, 2026, and will oversee the transition of the Ohio Elections Commission to the new entity until then.

ELECTIONS 2026

While former U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan had indicated a decision on whether he will jump into the governor's race will come by the end of September, a spokesman said Tuesday that he will be taking a little longer. "Tim Ryan is considering the enormity of how this election will impact our great state. He is going to take a few additional days to make his decision. Tim believes he is the strongest candidate to beat Vivek. He is excited about what he could do as governor to bring together all Ohioans and will have a decision soon," said Dennis Williard, a spokesman for Ryan.

Democrat Don Leonard this week launched his campaign for the 15th Congressional District at an event in Columbus, saying his campaign will be about "restoring economic fairness and building a government that works for ordinary people again." The seat is currently held by U.S. Rep. Mike Carey (R-Columbus).

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- Ohio Value Voters endorsed Marcell Strbich for secretary of state.
- The Ohio Senate campaign for Jim Hoops announced the endorsements of more than 50 local officials from the First Senate District as well as former Rep. Tony Burkley and former Sen. Lynn Wachtmann.
- The Ohio Treasurer campaign of Republican Kristina Roegner announced the endorsements of a majority of the Republican members of the Ohio House and Senate.



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

- The gubernatorial campaign of Republican Vivek Ramaswamy announced the endorsements of ACT Ohio and 65 county sheriffs.
- The gubernatorial campaign of Democrat Amy Acton announced the endorsements of a number of local officials including Cuyahoga County Council President Dale Miller as well as State Board of Education members Kristie Reighard, Teresa Fedor, Katie Hofmann, Mary Binegar, Karen Lloyd, Rhonda Johnson, and Delores Gray Ford.
- The gubernatorial campaign of Democrat Amy Acton announced the endorsement of former state executive director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and former state Rep. John Patterson.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Advocates say HB321 (Peterson) is too little, too late to right an underwater unemployment compensation (UC) system in Ohio that badly trails inflation and counterintuitively excludes low-wage workers. Policy Matters Ohio (PMO) and the Advocates for Ohio's Future coalition held a press conference this week on their understanding of the unemployment compensation system's real needs after 30 years of inaction. The taxable wage base (TWB) for employer unemployment contributions has remained \$9,000 since 1995, Policy Matters Research Director Zach Schiller and Work and Wages Fellow Bailey Sandin explained during Monday's remote presser. Rep. Bob Peterson's (R-Sabina) solvency tweak does almost nothing to change that, they said.

ENERGY/UTILITIES

The Ohio Nuclear Development Authority (ONDA) currently has five members -- with four more to be named -- but they selected member William Thesling as chair for the time being after he suggested identifying interim leadership which could be revisited later. Thesling had also suggested picking a treasurer, though the ONDA currently has no appropriated funds, but no member was nominated for that role and no vote was taken. Member Lei Raymond Cao had nominated Thesling for chair, which received no opposition. Thesling had also commented that a chairperson could set meeting agendas and speak to the "outside world" on ONDA's behalf.

The utility industry and ratepayer advocates including the Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) and Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) remained at cross purposes Wednesday on a proposed overhaul of natural gas ratemaking despite borrowed language from electric reset HB15 (Klopfenstein) in SB103's (Wilkin) latest substitute bill. The Senate Public Utilities Committee approved changes to SB103 (Wilkin) including the option for natural gas, water and wastewater utilities to adopt three-year forecasted



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

ratemaking or remain under the existing regulatory model; a 360-day deadline on Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) approval of rate cases otherwise adopted "by operation of law"; and expedited special contracts between utilities and large-load customers including data centers.

ENVIRONMENT

Conservation officials on Monday celebrated the restoration of approximately 160 acres combined of wetlands and native pollinator and forested habitats with the completion of the latest project of Gov. Mike DeWine's H2Ohio initiative to improve the state's water quality. The Black Fork Forest and Preserve Wetland Restoration project near Mifflin included the installation of a new wetland buffer approximately 4,200 feet in length alongside a stream that flows directly into the Black Fork section of the Mohican River. In total, more than 6,100 trees were planted as part of the forest buffer and pollinator areas.

The Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (OAQDA) has issued \$8.5 million in revenue bonds to finance a new housing development in downtown Columbus that is expected to result in significant air quality improvements. "The Artem on Gay project, developed by nonprofit organization Finance Fund, will bring a six-story, 71-unit affordable housing community and a major infrastructure investment to the heart of the city, while also generating significant economic and workforce benefits for the region," OAQDA said in a news release.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

In an interview with the Buckeye Flame this month, Rep. Christine Cockley (D-Columbus) publicly came out as "queer," making her the only open member of the LGBTQ+ community in the Ohio House. She told the publication that she was out to friends and family while in college, but said she never really talked about it much. She also said she has come out to some of her legislative colleagues and has found herself having to educate those around her who just don't understand her identity.

In addition to a vote completing the override of Gov. Mike DeWine's line-item veto of HB96 (Stewart) provisions eliminating certain property tax levy types, Wednesday's Senate session included passage of HB57 (Jarrells-Williams), introduced to address policies for using overdose medication in schools but amended to address religious release time as well; SCR10 (Lang-Craig), which supports the America 250-Ohio efforts; and HB144 (Click), which would expand the communication disability database.

Wednesday's Senate session included a vote to seat new Rep. Ashley Bryant Bailey (D-Cincinnati) to succeed Rep. Sedrick Denson, who resigned his seat early; concurrence



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

with Senate amendments to HB57; and passage of HB440 (Deeter-Stewart), regarding criminal background checks used by the Board of Nursing; HB259 (Daniels-Roemer), a road naming bill; HB293 (Rader-Mathews), designating the fourth Thursday of January as “NASA Day of Remembrance”; HR139 (Mathews-Odioso), to honor the selection of Pope Leo XIV, the first pope from the U.S.; and HCR20 (Dovilla-Santucci), recognizing the 250th anniversary of the founding of the U.S. Navy.

House Speaker Matt Huffman (R-Lima) discussed a range of topics with reporters following Wednesday's House Rules and Reference Committee hearing, particularly on what he plans for property taxes and the redistricting process. House Minority Leader Dani Isaacsohn (D-Cincinnati) discussed redistricting and property tax issues with reporters following hearing as well.

The Ohio Statehouse will celebrate National Fossil Day on Wednesday, Oct. 15 by offering a free fossil tour on Capitol Square. The Wednesday tour will run from noon until 1:30 p.m. Expert geologists will explore the limestone walls, stairs and columns that support the Ohio Statehouse. "This fossil tour is a unique opportunity for anyone fascinated by geology and natural history." While the event is free and public, participants are asked to RSVP to tours@ohiostatehouse.org at least two weeks in advance for groups of 10 or more.

In other legislative action, House Education Committee reported out HCR22 (Roemer-Daniels), which encourages students to read the Declaration of Independence as part of U.S. Semiquincentennial observances this school year; House Veterans and Military Development Committee reported out HCR21 (Schmidt), recognizing the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Marine Corps; and HCR23 (Newman-Mathews), recognizing the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Army and U.S. Army Chaplain Corps; and Senate Transportation Committee reported out road naming and license plate bills HB56 (Ray), HB171 (Schmidt) and SB189 (Craig).

GOVERNOR

The Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) gave its first-ever Child and Family Lifetime Advocate award to Gov. Mike DeWine and First Lady Fran DeWine this week. The award was given to the DeWines during PCSAO's annual conference Wednesday, marking the 45th anniversary of the membership organization of county children services agencies. PCSAO gave the award to the DeWines in recognition of their advocacy and leadership on issues related to children, families and child protective services.

Appointments made over the week include the following:



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

- Edward J. Roth III of Canton (Stark County), Heidi L. Gartland of Hudson (Summit County) and Kathy Doseck of Anna (Shelby County) to the Northeast Ohio Medical University Board of Trustees for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Sept. 21, 2031.
- Shelley Roth of Shaker Heights (Cuyahoga County) to the Cuyahoga Community College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Oct. 12, 2027.
- Lorina W. Wise of Reynoldsburg (Licking County), James R. Fowler of Columbus (Franklin County) and Jerome C. Revish II of Powell (Delaware County) reappointed to the Columbus State Community College Board of Trustees for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Aug. 31, 2031.
- Richard C. Simpson of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) to the Ohio Higher Educational Facility Commission for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Jan. 1, 2027.
- Jim Otte of Columbus (Franklin County) designated chair of the Broadcast Educational Media Commission for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Mark G. Wasylyshyn of Bowling Green (Wood County), Orvis L. Campbell of New Philadelphia (Tuscarawas County) and Kurt J. Schneider of Ashland (Ashland County) to the County Sheriffs' Standard Car-Marking and Uniform Commission for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Daniel P. Driscoll of Springfield (Clark County) to the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Sept. 3, 2026 and Tedd E. Frazier of Jackson (Jackson County) and Gary D. Lewis, Jr. of Gahanna (Franklin County) reappointed for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Sept. 3, 2028.
- Vernon P. Stanforth of Washington Court House (Fayette County), Wynette P. Carter-Smith of Springfield (Clark County) and Robert Chabali of Springboro (Warren County) reappointed to the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Sept. 19, 2028 and Thomas E. Kochert of Edon (Williams County) and Andrew D. Powers of Athens (Athens County) appointed for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Sept. 19, 2027.
- Jamael Tito Brown of Youngstown (Mahoning County) to the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Aug. 21, 2026



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

and Matthew J. Byrnes of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Aug. 21, 2028.

- Georgine Welo of South Euclid (Cuyahoga County) to the Transportation Review Advisory Council for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending June 29, 2028.

- Jeffrey D. Slyman of Tipp City (Miami County) to the State Racing Commission for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending March 31, 2027.

- DeLee M. Powell of Mansfield (Richland County) and Mark A. Campbell of Huber Heights (Montgomery County) to the Ohio Board of Motor Vehicle Repair for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Jan. 1, 2028.

- Tarah L. Goodman of Newark (Licking County) has been appointed to the Real Estate Appraiser Board for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027 and Elizabeth A. Sigg of Defiance (Defiance County) reappointed for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending June 30, 2028.

- Bradley C. Mader of Bellbrook (Greene County) and John E. Demmler of Chagrin Falls (Geauga County) to the Credit Union Council for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Sept. 22, 2028.

- Amy J. Casner of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Ohio FAIR Plan Underwriting Association Board of Governors for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Sept. 18, 2026.

- Jill N. Miller of Cincinnati (Hamilton County), Maleka J. James of Dayton (Montgomery County), Steven R. Oster of Mansfield (Richland County), Christine T. Sander of Powell (Delaware County), Tippi Cooper-Foley of Madison (Lake County), Michael Ingram of Mentor (Lake County), Tammi E. Middleton of Toronto (Jefferson County), Heidi A. Wilson of North Canton (Stark County), Terra A. Baker of Gahanna (Franklin County), Sarah Newland of Lima (Allen County), Erin C. Lucas of Athens (Athens County), Julia H. Stone of Lebanon (Warren County), Patricia McCollum of Novelty (Geauga County), Erin E. Simmons of Tiffin (Seneca County), John C. Jones of Toledo (Lucas County), Robyn Lightcap of Springboro (Warren County), Lynanne Gutierrez of Columbus (Franklin County), George L. Beatty III of Youngstown (Mahoning County), Berta Velilla-Rosengarten of Miamisburg (Montgomery County), Matt T. Kresic of Warren (Trumbull County), Ross "Chad" Nunamaker of Dayton (Montgomery County), Qianna Tidmore of Macedonia (Summit County), Carrie S. Beier of Fremont (Sandusky County), Jennifer R. Frey of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) and Nancy Mendez of Cleveland (Cuyahoga County) to the Children and Youth Advisory



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

Council for terms beginning Sept. 30, 2025, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor. Jill Miller was appointed chair.

- Kelsi M. Weaver of Waterville (Lucas County) appointed to the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Council for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending June 1, 2028 and Jo Hannah Ward of Delaware (Delaware County) and Shannon Monyak of Olmsted Township (Cuyahoga County) reappointed for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending June 1, 2028.

- Alexandra R. Zelaski of Cleveland (Cuyahoga County), Mathew Snider of Chillicothe (Ross County) and Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman of Dayton (Montgomery County) to the Ohio Nuclear Development Authority for terms beginning Oct. 2, 2025, and ending Oct. 1, 2030 and Robert J. Friedman III of Powell (Franklin County) for a term beginning Oct. 2, 2025, and ending Aug. 1, 2029.

- Brenda S. Shamblin of Stoutsville (Fairfield County), John F. Sarver III of Brook Park (Cuyahoga County), Shawn E. Nelson of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) and Dale R. Arnold of Newark (Licking County) reappointed to the Public Benefits Advisory Board for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending June 30, 2028.

- Brett H. Hillyer of Dennison (Tuscarawas County) to the Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Release Compensation Board for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending July 10, 2027 and Steven R. Bergman of Cincinnati (Clermont County), James R. Rocco of Aurora (Portage County) and Scott J. Fleming of Oakwood (Montgomery County) reappointed for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending July 10, 2028.

- Amy L. Weiskittel of New Richmond (Clermont County), Mark K. Papke of Grafton (Lorain County) and Brian J. Buschur of Centerville (Montgomery County) reappointed to the Ohio Environmental Education Fund Advisory Council for terms beginning Oct. 2, 2025, and ending Oct. 1, 2027.

- Gary C. Tennefoss of North Benton (Portage County) to the Waterways Safety Council for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Jan. 31, 2030.

- Kim M. Oberlander of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) and Mark E. Bronson of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the Dentist Loan Repayment Advisory Board for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Feb. 27, 2026 and Brian J. Taylor of Westerville (Franklin County) reappointed for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2025, and ending Feb. 27, 2027.

GREAT LAKES



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

The Great Lakes region faces the prospect of water shortages, groundwater conflicts, and contaminated aquifers as demand sharply increases from large water users such as data centers, semiconductor chip manufacturers, critical minerals miners and farmers, according to a new report from the Alliance for the Great Lakes (AGL). While the Great Lakes Compact prohibits diversions of Great Lakes surface and groundwater outside the basin, Great Lakes states are facing increasing and unprecedented demand from heavy-water-using sectors, AGL said in a news release.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

As the number of licensed medical professionals in Ohio has risen in recent years with the rise in use of telehealth and the state's membership in a growing number of interstate licensure compacts, the executive director of the State Medical Board of Ohio (SMBO) that oversees those licenses told the House General Government Committee on Wednesday that the board now has to be judicious in how to use its resources. Stephanie Loucka told the committee that SMBO licenses and regulates 103,024 health care professionals in Ohio, a 13 percent increase from 2019 and a 33 percent increase in the last decade.

The newly minted Ohio Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) announced its name change from the former Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) Wednesday, the day permanent law sections of the FY2627 budget bill, HB96 (Stewart), took effect. The next day, Gov. Mike DeWine's office announced that DBH Director LeeAnne Cornyn will step down next week, and be replaced on an interim basis by Assistant DBH Director Tia Marcel Moretti.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

August 2025 home sales were only slightly higher than monthly sales a year earlier, up 0.5 percent to reach 12,123, but the average price rose 5.1 percent to \$268,000, according to Ohio Realtors. August listings, at 36,943, were 10 percent higher than a year earlier.

JUDICIAL

Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy and fellow members and Court staff are looking for a few good men and women to serve as externs in Spring 2026. The seven justices, various Court divisions, the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission (OCSC) have posted externship opportunities for "researching, writing and analyzing legal issues," as the Court describes it.

LOBBYISTS



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

State government relations firm Government Solutions Group announced that it has formed a "strategic affiliation" with advocacy organization Capitol Consulting Group to expand the firm's reach and connect clients to enhanced expertise. Capitol Consulting Group will receive more infrastructure and new resources, according to the Government Solutions Group announcement.

Public affairs professional Kyle Petty is leaving the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) to launch 43 Consulting LLC, a new government relations firm. "I have spent nearly 15 years working in or around the Ohio Statehouse, including roles in the Ohio Senate, executive agencies, the governor's office, a contract lobbying firm, and most recently with CCAO," Petty said in a news release. He most recently served as managing director of policy for CCAO. While Petty is leaving CCAO, he said his new company's first client will be CCAO. The firm will represent CCAO before the executive and legislative branches of state government in Ohio.

Meanwhile, CCAO announced the hiring of Adam Schwiebert as its new managing director of policy. "Schwiebert brings a strong background in legislative affairs, policy analysis and county government advocacy," CCAO said. He previously served as CCAO external relations manager covering the agriculture and rural affairs portfolios. Most recently, Schwiebert served as legislative director at the Ohio Department of Taxation.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Fans of carotenoids, xanthophyll and anthocyanins will soon be getting their yearly fix. Those are the chemicals and pigments within the leaves blanketing Ohio that turn them orange, yellow and red, respectively, as they replace the green-making chlorophyll each autumn to cover the state in a tapestry of fall foliage. Ohio's astute arboreal enthusiasts may have already noticed the leaves taking on their fall form following a very dry late summer throughout much of the state. As September rolls into October, the website ExploreFall.com reports that most of the leaves that have already begun to change are in the eastern half of Ohio, while western Ohio is mostly still waiting for fall colors to emerge. The website's nationwide map projecting peak fall foliage can be found [HERE](#).

While visitors to Ohio's state parks may remember the old adage to "leave no trace" while exploring trails and landmarks, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is inviting those exploring the parks to join a digital challenge showing exactly which corners of Ohio they've been to. Real-world state parks explorers leaving a digital footprint have long been able to trace their steps and learn more about Ohio's state parks via the Outerspatial app. Specifically, the Ohio Trails+ portion of the app hosts bulletin boards, experiences and challenges based on each of Ohio's 76 state parks. The Ohio Trails+ challenge on the Outerspatial app can be found [HERE](#), with options available at the bottom of the page to download the app for either Android or iOS devices.



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

This year's extraordinary spread of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) among Ohio's deer population, particularly in Southeast Ohio, has led the Ohio Wildlife Council (OWC) to consider reducing the white-tailed deer bag limit in three of the area's hardest hit counties, Washington, Athens and Meigs, prior to this year's seven-day gun season in December. As of Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2025, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) had counted 8,214 public reports of dead or sick deer potentially carrying EHD. This marks a significant increase from 2,093 public reports of dead or sick deer from 2024 and 18 from 2023.

OHIO HISTORY

Before the U.S. Civil War and the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865 that abolished slavery in the U.S., dozens or more places in Ohio served as a refuge for former slaves escaping slave states in the South on their way to freedom in Canada via the Underground Railroad. Ohio's pivotal role in the fight for freedom for so many was highlighted along Ohio's Historical Underground Railroad Trail during International Underground Railroad Month in September.

PENSIONS

Some but not all of Ohio's five public pension funds have answered Sen. Mark Romanchuk's (R-Ontario) request to provide suggestions for what tools they would need to meet the stricter funding standard he is considering. Romanchuk has introduced placeholder legislation, SB69, with plans to shorten the period for systems to pay down their unfunded liabilities from 30 years to 20. He's asked the five systems to send him their ideas for what it would take to meet that new threshold.

A Tuesday court hearing about the constitutionality of the new governance structure for the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) spiraled into matters of statutory construction and legislative intent. An appellate judge and a representative of the attorney general's office used most of the oral argument session to discuss what to do when lawmakers add a subsection to the Ohio Revised Code but then omit that subsection in a subsequent enactment. Several educators are suing the state over elements of HB96 (Stewart) that refashion the STRS board to have a majority of political appointees and minority of members elected from the ranks of active and retired teachers - an inversion of the board structure to this point. The provisions of law, which also bar elected members from serving as chair or vice chair, were to take effect Tuesday but are blocked by a temporary restraining order issued in Franklin County Common Pleas Court. Shortly after Tuesday's hearing, the three-judge panel of the 10th District Court of Appeals denied the state's request to allow the new governance structure to take effect while litigation is pending.



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

PUBLIC SAFETY

Gov. Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) Director Andy Wilson announced Monday the launch of the "RoadReady Ohio" app, which they say will support the families of new drivers who are working toward getting their driver's license. The launch of the new app coincides with a provision included in HB96 (Stewart), effective Tuesday, Sept. 30, requiring those under the age of 21 to have taken driver education prior to receiving their license.

REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT

The Ohio Redistricting Commission will now get a crack at creating a new congressional map after the Joint Committee on Congressional Redistricting adjourned Tuesday without moving a plan - action that would have been moot anyway given there were no legislative sessions scheduled ahead of Tuesday's deadline. Tuesday's hearing saw Senate Minority Leader Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) and multiple witnesses from the public questioning the lack of a proposed plan from the majority Republicans. After the hearing, committee Co-Chairs Rep. Adam Bird (R-Cincinnati) and Sen. Jane Timken (R-Canton) told reporters there is not a map yet and they are going through the process to hear from the public first.

As the first deadline for lawmakers to draw a new congressional district map has come and gone, House Minority Leader Dani Isaacsohn (D-Cincinnati) and Senate Minority Leader Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) sent a letter to Gov. Mike DeWine asking him to convene the Ohio Redistricting Commission within the next seven days. Tuesday was the deadline for the General Assembly to pass a plan with bipartisan support. With that date passed, it now falls to the Ohio Redistricting Commission -- the panel made up of DeWine, Secretary of State Frank LaRose, Auditor Keith Faber, and appointees of each of the caucuses - to try to come up with a bipartisan plan. If they fail, the Legislature can pass a plan with a simple majority.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Controlling Board Monday approved a \$76,000 contract requested by the adjutant general's department that would investigate a section of a Portage County training center for historical significance, after lawmakers on the panel questioned its necessity. Sen. Shane Wilkin (R-Hillsboro) asked the agency why it was investigating the confines of Camp James A. Garfield Joint Military Training Center in Portage County for historical significance even though the center had been there since 1940.

TAXATION



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

The association for school superintendents is concerned about the financial effects on predominantly rural schools of property tax legislation that could clear a House committee this week. Paul Imhoff, governmental relations director for the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), told *Hannah News* that his group supported the original concept of HB186 (Hoops-D. Thomas) and believes it could have forestalled the property tax crisis of today had it been in place years ago. But amendments since its March introduction, particularly retroactivity language added last week in the House Ways and Means Committee, are cause for concern among school leaders.

Local officials and legislative veterans asked by Gov. Mike DeWine to recommend property tax reforms voted Tuesday to approve a report including 20 proposals, some of which modify or refine vetoed budget provisions that gave rise to effort. Tuesday marked the final, virtual meeting of the working group convened by DeWine after his line-item veto of property tax provisions in HB96 (Stewart). A copy of the report is [HERE](#).

Gov. Mike DeWine's veto of budget language prohibiting certain types of local government and school levies was overridden by the Senate on Wednesday. The Senate voted 21-11 to override the governor's line-item veto of HB96 (Stewart), with Sens. Louis Blessing (R-Cincinnati) and Tom Patton (R-Strongsville) joining Democrats in voting against the override. The House voted to override the veto in July.

House Speaker Matt Huffman (R-Lima) said Wednesday he hopes to complete the two property tax veto overrides the House teed up but couldn't get over the finish line this summer, suggesting that overlap between the vetoed policies and what Gov. Mike DeWine's property tax workgroup recommended might help to ameliorate concerns of hesitant Republicans. "It's an easier equation because the explanation that I've had is that the governor's working group not exactly but largely supported what the House did in the budget," he said after the Wednesday's voting session, pointing specifically to recommendations one and three of the working group's report. "That may make a difference to some members, and perhaps to the governor, for any lobbying he might do against the override."

Broad property tax legislation originally encompassing the repeal of inside millage and reforms to the 20-mill floor shrank Wednesday to propose only a cap on growth of inside millage revenue. Meanwhile, a separate proposal to cap revenue growth for schools on the 20-mill floor did not move out of committee as members considered the views of county officials and districts. Rep. David Thomas (R-Jefferson), vice chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, moved a substitute version of his HB335 to effectively strip out the introduced language, some of which addressed policies enacted in the budget. In their place, he proposed a 3 percent cap on the growth of revenue from inside millage. During separate consideration of HB186 Wednesday, county auditors and commissioners



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

urged quick action on the legislation, but schools warned that new retroactivity language would cause immediate hardship. Before hearing witnesses, the committee adopted an amendment from Thomas, 0828-1, which would direct the Ohio Department of Taxation (ODT) to help county auditors with calculation of the credit to be granted under the bill for tax year 2025.

TECHNOLOGY/AEROSPACE

House Technology and Innovation Chair Thad Claggett (R-Newark) welcomed the committee back from its legislative break Tuesday with remarks giving a "10,000 foot view" on tech issues and related legislation, particularly around artificial intelligence (AI). Claggett said these issues are moving "enormously fast" and detailed how major tech companies have eliminated over 77,000 positions this year as AI is increasingly used for coding, customer service and data entry. He also discussed how large vendors are mixing AI models and increased usage could make it hard to adapt legal liability if AI systems contribute to an overall system that breaks the law.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

On Oct. 1, 1955, at 12:01 a.m., Gov. Frank J. Lausche declared, "Remove all barricades. Open the gates and let the traffic flow!" Thus, the Ohio Turnpike, the state's first "super highway," became official. The Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission this week celebrated the 70th anniversary of the opening of the turnpike, holding an event in Berea Wednesday to commemorate the milestone. Ohio Turnpike Chairman Jerry Hruby told about 400 audience members that during construction over the course of 38 months, there were four major rivers to cross. The widest river valley to cross was the Cuyahoga River where it flows in Summit County.

VETERANS

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS) recently announced 20 members of the 2025 Veterans Hall of Fame class, saying they represent 12 Ohio counties and four branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. The living members range from 58 to 90 years old, and there are three posthumous inductees. Up to 20 members can be inducted per year, and the Hall of Fame honors accomplishments after military service.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) directors last week pitched another 1 percent cut from state and local government insurance rates in 2026 for an average cost of 70.3 cents per \$100 of payroll or a total public employer premium of \$184 million. The board heard from Actuarial Committee Chairwoman Elizabeth Riczko, world class



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management – government relations – strategic planning

underwriting project executive for Nationwide, who emphasized that projected savings are a government-wide average for State Insurance Fund costs.

actionTRACK - Hannah News Service, Inc.

The Fitzgibbon Group
88 E. Broad Street, Suite 1450
Columbus, Ohio 43215
www.fitzgibbongroup.com