



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 March 27, 2026

- HB23 CREATE ESCAPED CONVICT ALERT PROGRAM, ALLOW PARENT COMPANY APPLICATION** (ROEMER B, WILLIAMS J) To create the escaped convict alert program and to allow a prior parent company of a bank to apply to the Secretary of State for the appointment and commission of banking police officers.
Current Status: 12/1/2025 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. 3/2/26
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-23>
- HB26 REQUIRE STATE, LOCAL IMMIGRATION COOPERATION** (WILLIAMS J, FISCHER T) To require state and local authorities to cooperate with the federal government in the enforcement of immigration laws, to prescribe funding reductions for noncompliance, to name this act the Protecting Ohio Communities Act, and to declare an emergency.
Current Status: 4/29/2025 - House Public Safety, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-26>
- HB96 OPERATING BUDGET** (STEWART B) To make operating appropriations for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027, to levy taxes, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of state programs.
Current Status: 10/1/2025 - Consideration of Governor's Veto; Senate Overrides Veto on Item 66, Vote 21-11
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-96>
- HB309 LAW CHANGES-COUNTY BUDGET COMMISSIONS** (THOMAS D) To modify the law governing county budget commissions and property taxation.
Current Status: 12/19/2025 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. 3/20/26
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-309>
- HB317 UAS PURCHASE LIMITS-FOREIGN ENTITIES** (MATHEWS T) To prohibit the purchase of small unmanned aircraft systems manufactured or assembled by a covered foreign entity.
Current Status: 3/24/2026 - House Technology and Innovation, (Second 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



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

increases from inside millage levies occurring due to a reappraisal or update.

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

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

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

Current Status: 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: 3/18/2026 - Re-Referred to Committee

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: 3/18/2026 - **BILL AMENDED**, House Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

- HB425 PROHIBIT TRESPASS, UNAUTHORIZED RECORDING-DRONES (HOOPS J)** To prohibit trespass and types of unauthorized recording with an unmanned aerial vehicle system.
Current Status: 3/10/2026 - House Transportation, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-425>
- HB466 LEVY REQUIREMENT-PROPERTY TAX APPROVAL (LEAR B, RITTER K)** To require certain subdivisions to obtain the approval of the body that created the subdivision before levying a property tax.
Current Status: 3/4/2026 - House Local Government, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-466>
- HB473 PROHIBIT PUBLIC EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTION PAYMENTS (THOMAS D)** To prohibit a public employer from paying employee contributions to a state retirement system.
Current Status: 2/25/2026 - House Public Insurance and Pensions, (Third Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-473>
- HB499 LAW CHANGES-COUNTY BUDGET COMMISSIONS (BARHORST T, KING A)** To modify the law governing county budget commissions and property taxation.
Current Status: 10/8/2025 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-499>
- HB503 REQUIRE VOTER APPROVAL-RECIPROCITY TAX CREDITS (ROEMER B, WORKMAN H)** To require voter approval to reduce or repeal a municipal income tax reciprocity credit, to allow a voter initiative to enact or increase such a credit, and to require the Department of Taxation to conduct a study of municipal income taxation.
Current Status: 3/24/2026 - Senate Ways and Means, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-503>
- HB520 ESTABLISH COUNTY BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEES (MATHEWS T, THOMAS D)** To establish and convene a Blue Ribbon Committee in each county to review and assess each taxing unit within the county and each county program or department to identify duplication of services and generally to streamline and improve county efficiency and effectiveness.
Current Status: 2/4/2026 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, House Local Government, (Third Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-520>



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

- HB598 ALLOW RESIDENTIAL STABILITY ZONES-TAXES** (SIGRIST M, HOOPS J) To authorize local governments to create residential stability zones where homeowners may qualify for a partial property tax exemption.
Current Status: 3/11/2026 - House Ways and Means, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-598>
- HB608 LAW CHANGES-PROPERTY TAXES** (THOMAS D, GLASSBURN C) To modify the law governing property taxes and other local taxes.
Current Status: 2/4/2026 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-608>
- HB673 PROPERTY TAX CREDIT EXPANSION** (STEPHENS J) To expand the statewide owner-occupied residence property tax credit to all tax levies.
Current Status: 2/25/2026 - House Ways and Means, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-673>
- HB695 NDA PROHIBITION-LOCAL OFFICIALS** (BIRD A, STEWART B) To prohibit certain local elected officials from entering into nondisclosure agreements.
Current Status: 3/11/2026 - House Local Government, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-695>
- HB746 POLITICAL SUBDIVISION HEALTH PLANS** (THOMAS D) To allow a political subdivision to participate in the same state health plan offered to state employees.
Current Status: 3/18/2026 - Referred to Committee House Local Government
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-HB-746>
- SB69 INTENTION TO REFORM-STATE PUBLIC RETIREMENT SYSTEMS** (ROMANCHUK M) To declare the General Assembly's intent to enact legislation to reform the law governing the state's public retirement systems.
Current Status: 2/12/2025 - Referred to Committee Senate Financial Institutions, Insurance and Technology
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA136-SB-69>
- SB275 ELIGIBLE HOMEOWNERS-DEFER PROPERTY TAX PAYMENT** (CRAIG H, REYNOLDS M) To allow eligible homeowners to defer the payment of a portion of their property taxes.
Current Status: 10/28/2025 - Senate Ways and Means, (First Hearing)



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

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

Friday, March 27, 2026

AGING

The Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) is inviting nominations to honor current or long-time Ohio residents age 60 or older who have made and continue to make a lasting impact on their communities, their professions or their vocations for induction into the Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame Class of 2026. Nominations for individuals to be considered for the induction class in September 2026 must be received by Tuesday, March 31, 2026. Information about the nomination process and the form to nominate someone can be found [HERE](#). Nominees will be evaluated on the following factors:

- The impact that their contributions and accomplishments have had in keeping Ohio on the leading edge of innovation and responsiveness to the growing and changing aging population.
- The degree to which they are respected and vital members of society who continue to grow, thrive and contribute.

BALLOT ISSUES

Attorney General Dave Yost Thursday certified the title and summary for a proposed constitutional amendment that would ban large data centers in Ohio. Backers of the amendment, which states "construction of a data center is hereby prohibited" and further defines data centers as those that have an aggregate monthly demand or peak load of greater than 25 megawatts, however derived from any energy source, or a combination thereof," submitted the proposal to Yost earlier this month. The issue now goes to the Ohio Ballot Board, which must meet within 10 days of receiving the attorney general's certification to determine if the proposal contains one or more amendments. Once the amendment clears the Ohio Ballot Board, backers would need to collect at least 413,487 valid signatures and submit them by Wednesday, July 1, in order to put the issue before voters on the November ballot.

FY27-28 CAPITAL APPROPRIATIONS

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) hopes to replace windows and doors installed in the major Statehouse renovations of 30 years ago, according to its request for the upcoming capital budget. The board, a panel of legislative and



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

gubernatorial appointees who oversee the Statehouse and its grounds, is seeking \$15 million, although it acknowledges in its request that is somewhat of a rough estimate. "Accurate estimates have been difficult to obtain due to the highly customized nature of the work and the absence of detailed specifications. As a result, costs have varied, though experts have advised that this amount is reasonable," states the funding request. CSRAB touts increased security and improved heating and cooling efficiency from proper weatherproofing and sealing of doors and windows as benefits of the project.

FY27-28 CAPITAL REAPPROPRIATIONS

Despite efforts by the Senate Finance Committee to include a couple of amendments in the capital reappropriations bill, HB730 (Stewart), they were removed on the Senate floor when the bill came to a vote Wednesday so it could be sent directly to the governor for his signature, thus meeting the March 31 deadline for passage. The amendments would have appropriated the approximately \$404.0 million the state received for rural health from the federal government. Addressing the Senate's decision to pull back on planned amendments to HB730, Speaker of the House Matt Huffman (R-Lima) said he'd been under the impression the chambers were in agreement on rural health funding included in a Tuesday Senate committee amendment, but that turned out not to be the case when the matter came to the full Senate. He said given the must-pass nature of the underlying reappropriations language, the cleanest approach was simply to pull the amendments and deal with them later. Senate President Rob McColley (R-Napoleon) said there is still a possibility the money could go out through the Controlling Board.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/URBAN REVITALIZATION

Two House members on opposite sides of the aisle this week introduced legislation they said would improve oversight and create transparency with JobsOhio. Meanwhile, former Gov. John Kasich, who created the entity and was the biggest cheerleader of it during his administration, criticized it, saying it appears to have entered "mission drift" following recent news about its role supporting a podcast hosted by Kristanthe Vlachos who has since been identified as having been in an "inappropriate relationship" with now former Ohio State University President Ted Carter. The situation has led to renewed calls for transparency at JobsOhio, the nonprofit economic development arm of the state funded by state liquor profits.

EDUCATION

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) outlined its plans to ramp up literacy rates across the state during its public meeting Thursday. DEW presentations focused primarily on the science of reading initiatives outlined by Gov. Mike DeWine in his "State of the State" address including regional implementation teams, instructional



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

coaches and DEW's statewide attendance dashboard. Valerie Kunze, DEW chief of family engagement and school partnerships, discussed the attendance dashboard, a tool she said would report risks of chronic absenteeism in real time. The dashboard is set to launch Wednesday, April 15. She suggested the tool will help schools develop attendance policies by Saturday, Aug. 1, a new requirement under state law.

Gov. Mike DeWine and DEW Director Stephen D. Dackin recently announced 109 Ohio schools earned the Governor's Science of Reading Champions Award for 2026, which recognizes schools that stand out for their commitment to the science of reading and their work using this method to improve student engagement and literacy outcomes. The governor first announced the Science of Reading Champions Award in 2025 as part of his ongoing efforts to highlight the effectiveness of the science of reading as the best method for teaching Ohio students to read. The inaugural class of awardees included 48 schools. These schools will retain their designation as Science of Reading Champions following the announcement of this year's class.

ELECTIONS

The House General Government Committee hearing Tuesday on HB577 (Ferguson), which requires photo ID for absentee voting and making voter registration changes, had a number of witnesses speaking about flaws they see in the current system that could enable fraudulent absentee voting. First to speak was former legislator William Schuck, who identified himself as being there in an individual capacity rather than representing any organization. He focused his remarks on technical improvements he suggested, particularly ensuring the photo ID requirement cannot be circumvented.

ELECTIONS 2026

Ohio boards of elections Friday, March 20 began sending ballots to military and overseas voters as the Tuesday, May 5 primary election officially began. The voter registration deadline for the primary is Monday, April 6, with early, in-person and absentee voting beginning for all other voters on Tuesday, April 7. "As a veteran, I believe those who defend our democracy should always have a voice in it," said LaRose. The secretary of state's office said military voters can find everything they need, including ballot request forms, deadlines, and submission instructions, at www.MilitaryVotes.Ohio.gov. Similarly, civilians currently overseas are encouraged to visit www.VoterPassport.Ohio.gov.

Challenger Sherrod Brown has taken an early lead on U.S. Sen. Jon Husted (R-OH) in terms of ad spending before the two presumed candidates face off in November's election. As of March 26, data from AdImpact show that more than twice as much money



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

has been spent on ads in support of Brown at \$406,434 than has been spent thus far in support of Husted at \$202,856.

A Democratic candidate for the 50th House District was disqualified by the Stark County Board of Elections because he does not live in the district, the *Canton Repository* reported. Brian Sommers had been certified to appear on the Democratic ballot for the Tuesday, May 5 primary, in February, but after the board received an inquiry from a voter about Sommers' residency, the Stark County board investigated and removed him, the newspaper said. The error was blamed on an issue in the board's voter registration system. Sommers' disqualification leaves Rylan Finzer of Massillon as the sole Democrat in the race. Rep. Matthew Kishman (R-Minerva) holds the seat and is running for re-election. He is unopposed in the Republican primary.

U.S. District Court Judge Sarah Morrison Friday granted a temporary restraining order allowing a candidate to remain in the Republican primary for the 15th Congressional District after Secretary of State Frank LaRose broke a Franklin County Board of Elections tie in favor of his removal from the ballot. Samuel Ronan filed to run against U.S. Rep. Mike Carey (R-Columbus) but his candidacy was challenged by Republican voter Marc Schare, who argued that Ronan is not a member of the Republican Party. After a hearing in which Ronan testified that he was a Republican, the Franklin County Board of Elections tied 2-2 on the protest, sending the issue to LaRose, who sided with Republicans on the board and ordered Ronan removed from the ballot. After a hearing, Morrison sided with Ronan and granted a temporary restraining order to put Ronan on the Republican primary ballot until a preliminary injunction hearing can be held on Friday, April 3.

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- The campaign of Democratic secretary of state candidate Allison Russo announced the endorsement of the Greater Cincinnati Building and Construction Trades Council.
- The Ohio Chamber of Commerce Political Action Committee endorsed Allison Russo in the Democratic Primary for Ohio Secretary of State; Robert Sprague in the Republican Primary for Ohio Secretary of State; Kristina Roegner in the Republican Primary for Ohio Treasurer of State; and John Kulewicz in the Democratic Primary for Ohio Attorney General. The PAC said following the primary, it "will conduct a thorough review of nominees and make general election endorsement decisions later this year."
- The NFIB Ohio PAC endorsed Zac Haines for Ohio Senate; and Brian Lorenz, Andrew Brenner, Jean Schmidt, Brian Lampton, Gary Click, and Larry Kidd for Ohio House.



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

- The gubernatorial campaign of Democrat Amy Acton announced the endorsement of the Leadership Now PAC.
- The gubernatorial campaign of independent Timothy Grady announced the endorsement of Campbell City Councilman Tim O'Bryan.

ENERGY/UTILITIES

The U.S. Department of Energy and U.S. Department of Commerce announced Friday an agreement with AEP Ohio and SoftBank to redevelop the federal energy agency's land for a major new natural gas power plant that will provide electricity for a large data center in Pike County. According to the federal energy agency, SB Energy, a subsidiary of SoftBank, will build a 10 gigawatt natural gas generation plant to connect to the local grid and provide power for a new 10 GW data center development at the Portsmouth site. As part of the agreement, SB Energy and AEP Ohio will work together to upgrade and build transmission lines in Southern Ohio. The federal administration said this complies with President Donald Trump's "Ratepayer Protection Pledge," meant to prevent the public from paying for infrastructure improvements related to the technology boom.

House Democrats Tuesday unveiled a package of bills they said are aimed at addressing high energy costs, including a 12-month utility rate freeze. House Minority Leader Dani Isaacsohn (D-Cincinnati) said the cost of living is too high for too many people, and at the heart of those costs are high utility bills. The bills will be part of an affordability package Isaacsohn said will be rolled out over the next several weeks addressing cost drivers for many families, including health care, housing, child care, energy, and consumer protections.

Executive Vice President Asim Haque of Governmental and Member Services for PJM Interconnection told senators Tuesday the 13-state electric grid may have to rely on expensive "backstop" thermal generators approved by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) during the recent winter freeze to meet data center demands while Ohio and other states await completion of natural gas plants in a time of capacity power price caps, depressed market interest and supply chain problems. The former chair of the Public Utilities Commission System of Ohio (PUCO) said the Buckeye State, and specifically the General Assembly (GA), the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) and the commission are performing well compared to other PJM states in passing and implementing energy overhaul bill HB15 (Klopfenstein).

ENVIRONMENT

The Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (OAQDA) recently approved \$6.85 million in air quality revenue bond financing for Cotter's Grove LLC through its Clean



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

Air Improvement Program (CAIP). The project will support clean air and energy-efficient upgrades at Cotter's Grove - a 96-unit, multi-building extended-stay residential apartment community located in Columbus that is designed to meet the growing housing needs of the region's workforce.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Gov. Mike DeWine and First Lady Fran DeWine joined with other Ohio leaders, artists and community members at the Ohio Statehouse Wednesday to break ground for the Ohio Women's Monument, which will permanently honor generations of women who shaped Ohio and the nation. "Ohio's story has always been shaped by remarkable women whose leadership strengthened our communities, expanded opportunity and helped move our state forward," said Gov. DeWine. Guests were welcomed by actors dressed as suffragettes, highlighting the role Ohio women played in the fight for voting rights and civic participation. The monument, created by sculptor Brenda Council, features four granite columns engraved with the ideals of equality, justice and liberation, with the names of notable Ohio women etched into the stone. Bronze figures representing women from different eras will stand atop three of the columns, while a fourth column will remain open as a symbolic space for future generations.

The House voted Wednesday for legislation to institute an abortion waiting period similar to one now tied up in court over questions of whether it violates the 2023 abortion and reproductive rights amendment added to the Ohio Constitution by voters. Under HB347 (Odioso-Williams) abortions can only be carried out after a physician talks with a patient at least 24 hours ahead of time to provide specified information. The legislation includes an exception for medical emergencies where the procedure is needed to prevent death or serious harm to the mother. Taking payment for health care services related to the abortion is prohibited until informed consent is obtained under the bill. Physicians who don't comply with the informed consent requirements would be subject to civil liability and professional discipline. It passed 64-32.

The chamber also passed new restrictions on public drag performances, designating them as criminal if they include content "harmful to juveniles" and are performed outside of an "adult cabaret." The legislation, HB249 (King-Williams), passed 63-30.

In addition, the chamber voted 95-0 to increase penalties for school zone traffic offenses, including those leading to death, to make them similar to penalties for violations in construction zones.

The chamber voted 89-4 to pass HB372 (Abrams-Plummer), which boosts penalties for knowingly killing a police officer, corrections officer or prosecutor, making aggravated murder of such professionals generally punishable by life without parole at minimum.



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

The chamber also adopted a resolution, HR369 (Huffman-Isaacsohn), in memory of former Rep. Helen Rankin, the first African American woman elected to the Ohio House. Rep. Ashley Bryant Bailey (D-Cincinnati) told of Rankin's multi-session quest to mandate coverage for mammograms and pap screenings, and how she was told by her mostly male colleagues at the time her proposal was "frivolous."

Also passing Wednesday were the following:

- **HB176** (Fischer-Lorenz), to create a universal regulatory sandbox program. It passed unanimously.
- **HB220** (Workman), which addresses health care prior authorization. It passed 80-11.
- **HB252** (Click-Bird), addressing burglary offenses. It passed 63-23.

Rep. Ron Ferguson (R-Wintersville) made multiple attempts on the floor Wednesday to amend elections legislation into other bills, including HB217. "This bill, amendment, was introduced to eight separate bills on today's agenda, which I've never seen before," said Speaker of the House Matt Huffman (R-Lima). "On top of that, a voting bill is not germane to a missing person's database bill." Huffman ruled the amendment out of order and declined to recognize Ferguson in other instances where he rose to speak. Later, when Huffman gathered with reporters for a customary post-session interview, Ferguson joined the crush around Huffman and asked him about a "bounty" placed on Ferguson by a "donor" to Huffman, political consultant Bobby Ina. "This is for the media. You want to talk to me about that, you can meet me in my office," Huffman told him.

Asked about how the federal "One Big Beautiful Bill" may cut Ohio's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funding substantially if it doesn't decrease its error rate to a certain threshold, Speaker Matt Huffman (R-Lima) told reporters after the House Rules and Reference Committee meeting that he sees that as a "serious issue" and his understanding is Ohio is one of three states where that is handled at the local level. He added he wasn't proposing a state takeover but if individual counties' error rates mean the state as a whole will suffer "then we'll have to deal with that in a more specific way."

In response to a *Hannah News* question on the Trump administration's proposal for a national framework on artificial intelligence (AI) policy and avoiding a "patchwork" of state laws, Huffman said that appeared to be an area "that probably is ripe for the interstate commerce clause" and appropriate for the federal government to consider. However, he added AI-related topics around law enforcement and protecting individuals, particularly minors, should remain a focus for state legislation.



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

After session, House Minority Leader Dani Isaacsohn (D-Cincinnati) criticized Republicans' continued focus on abortion restrictions. "I don't know how many times Ohioans need to make it clear: a woman's right to choose is enshrined in the Ohio Constitution, and so we have to stop having these debates. Ohioans want us focused on lowering their property taxes, on making it more affordable to pay their energy bills, easier to access their first house. That's what Ohioans want us to be focused on," he said.

In addition to amending and passing the capital reappropriations bill, HB730 (Stewart), the Senate passed SB214 (Koehler), which removes firearms mufflers and suppressors from the classification of dangerous ordnance, by a vote of 31-1, with Liston the only no. Sen. Kyle Koehler (R-Springfield) said the devices are not close to any of the other items on the dangerous ordnance list, adding they are not like the devices seen in movies. He compared them to noise cancelling earbuds.

Senators unanimously passed the other bills on their agenda, including the following:

- **SB254** (Craig-Wilson), to change the designation for "Ohio Deaf History Month" to April to put it in line with national Deaf History Month.
- **SB302** (Johnson), to create the "Land of U.S. Grant" license plate.
- **SB306** (Lang), making updates to Ohio's insurance laws.
- **SB318** (Cutrona), authorizing a law enforcement agency to provide school resource services to chartered nonpublic schools.
- **SB334** (Cirino) to designate a portion of I-480 in Cuyahoga County as the "Officer Jacob J. Derbin Memorial Highway."

The House Judiciary Committee heard Wednesday from numerous proponents of a bill to specify that affirming a child's sex at birth cannot be deemed abuse or used in child placement decisions. The committee's meeting was the second for HB693 (Click-Williams). Nearly 20 people signed up to provide testimony in person or in writing.

All 11 entities that appeared before the Sunset Review Committee Wednesday requested reauthorization. The joint committee, chaired by Sen. Kyler Koehler (R-Springfield), is charged with evaluating the usefulness, performance and effectiveness of various minor state agencies. Those who testified Wednesday represented the Apprenticeship Council, Child Support Guideline Advisory Council, STABLE Account Program Advisory Board, State Audit Committee, Workers' Compensation Board of Directors and Board Nominating Committee, Ohio Expositions Commission, Environmental Health Specialist



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

Advisory Board, Ohio Nuclear Development Authority, Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism, and the Student Tuition Recovery Authority.

Prolific sophomore legislator Rep. Josh Williams (R-Toledo) said Thursday his 100th piece of legislation for this General Assembly is meant to help working Ohioans move from Medicaid to private insurance without facing benefits cliff issues that currently prevent them from taking better wages or hours. To date, Williams -- who is running for the U.S. House's 9th District rather than seeking re-election -- has offered 97 bills and two resolutions. He introduced 30 bills and five resolutions in his first term.

Republican members of the Joint Committee on Agency Rules Review (JCARR) defeated a bid by Democrats Monday to invalidate the DeWine administration's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rules as more "burdensome" on the elderly than what federal law requires. "It does seem non-logical. Logic's not necessarily in our jurisdiction here," said House Chair Jamie Callender (R-Concord) of federal SNAP changes. Rep. Sean Brennan (D-Parma) moved to invalidate Rules 5101:4-3-11 and -13, and Sen. Tim Schaffer (R-Lancaster) moved to table. All Democrats voted against tabling the invalidation motion.

Disagreeing with the Legislative Service Commission (LSC) that the estimated revenue loss for the state would be between \$615.0 million and \$645.6 million in Tax Year 2027 and \$647.8 million and \$679.8 million in Tax Year 2028 if his HB617 were to pass, Rep. Tom Young (R-Washington Twp.) called those estimates "static" and not reflective of what would happen if Ohio's capital gains tax were repealed. He spoke Tuesday at a news conference at the Statehouse. Rather, he said he has done a "dynamic" scoring of the bill which he said is more reflective of the capital investment his bill would spur because that flows over a period of time, rather than seeing results right away.

Though clinical ibogaine usage is currently prohibited in the United States with its status as a Schedule I substance with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, witnesses including clinicians and researchers told the Ibogaine Treatment Study Committee on Tuesday that Ohio should support clinical trials on the drug that prioritize veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other individuals with opioid use disorder.

In other legislative action, the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee reported out HB644 (G. Manning) which creates the Higher Education Evidence-Based Innovation Fund; the Senate Addiction and Community Revitalization Committee reported out HB393 (Click-Brewer) which requires community corrections facilities to prepare inmates for release; the Senate Education Committee reported out HB462 (Richardson) which addresses student use of nasal epinephrine inhalers; the Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee reported out SB321 (Schaffer) which deals with special police carrying firearms; the Senate Health



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

Committee reported out SB320 (Roegner) which enters Ohio into the Athletic Trainer Compact; and HB377 (Deeter) which revises law regarding hair removal; and the Senate Transportation Committee reported out road naming bills SB334 (Cirino) and SB364 (Patton).

HANNAH NEWS RACES TO WATCH

Four candidates are running in the 48th District Republican primary for the opportunity to secure the House seat currently occupied by Rep. Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton), who is term limited. The district is mostly in Stark County and includes the following cities: New Baltimore, Uniontown, Hartville, Marlboro, Greentown, Lexington Township, North Canton, Alliance, Nimishillen Township and Louisville. The district leans Republican with a 62 percent Republican political index and 37 percent Democratic political index, according to 2022 demographic data compiled by Dave's Redistricting App. Alliance Councilman Ed Lohnes, Refuge of Hope executive board member Greg Wolfe, former Rep. Christina Hagan and Lake Township Trustee Sue Grabowski are all running for this seat.

One of the most stalwart members of the House Democratic Caucus is facing a primary challenge from a first-time candidate for the Legislature as Rep. Dontavius Jarrells (D-Columbus) is facing Christopher Robbins in this May's primary election. The winner of the Democratic primary will presumably face in November's election Republican Joel A. Greff, who is running unopposed in his party's primary. Jarrells is seeking his fourth term in the House, having represented central Columbus since 2020.

Three Democrats are in the running for the Democratic nomination for the 58th House District being vacated by Lauren McNally (D-Youngstown) who is running for Mahoning County Commissioner. Basia Adamczak, previously on the Youngstown City Council, John Boccieri, former state legislator and congressman, and Jordan Pegues, who works in the manufacturing industry, are all on the ballot for the Democratic nomination for this seat. The district is located entirely in Mahoning County and includes the cities of Youngtown, Poland and Austintown. The district leans Democratic with a roughly 55 percent Democratic political index and 44 percent Republican political index, according to 2022 demographic data compiled by Dave's Redistricting App.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Newly appointed Ohio State University (OSU) President Ravi Bellamkonda announced Monday that Trevor Brown will serve as interim executive vice president and provost for a two-year term, pending approval by the university's Board of Trustees. Though his new role will be effective immediately, OSU said Brown will continue to hold his title of dean of the Glenn College through Thursday, April 30. Beginning Friday, May 1, Stephanie



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

Moulton, professor and associate dean for faculty and research at Glenn College, will become acting dean. Brown joined Ohio State's faculty in 2001 and became dean of the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at its inception in 2015. Prior to that, he served as director of the then-Glenn School, according to OSU.

The Polymer Industry Cluster's (PIC) pilot facility planned near the University of Akron (UA) has received \$1 million in federal spending for FY26, according to a release sent out by the university. The boost in federal funds was championed by U.S. Sen. Bernie Moreno (R-OH), a lawmaker UA said has been a "significant supporter" of PIC's work to strengthen the polymer industry in Ohio. The federal funds will go toward the purchase of polymer processing equipment for the innovation campus, UA said, which will include the construction of the new facility adjacent to the National Polymer Innovation Center on the university's campus.

JUDICIAL

Justices of the Ohio Supreme Court decided Tuesday to consider the question of whether state courts, rather than the State Employment Relations Board (SERB), is the proper venue for an ex-union member seeking to terminate withdrawal of dues from his paycheck. The case marks the latest in a series of lawsuits over dues since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2018 that public sector labor unions cannot require non-members to pay fees for collective bargaining activities in the case *Janus v. AFSCME*.

LIBRARIES

Aimee Fifarek, director and CEO of the Public Library of Youngtown and Mahoning County, is one of two candidates vying to be president of the Public Library Association (PLA). The Ohio Library Council Board of Directors voted to endorse her candidacy. The PLA is an association of public libraries in the U.S. and Canada and an affiliate of parent organization American Library Association (ALA.) Fifarek is vying with Skye Patrick, county librarian and director for the Los Angeles County Library in California, for the post.

MARIJUANA/HEMP

Marijuana and hemp omnibus bill SB56 (Huffman) took full effect on Friday, March 20 after a last-minute attempt to block the law from taking effect was denied by Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Jaiza Page. A lawsuit brought by a group of businesses involved in creating or distributing hemp-infused products alleged that SB56 is invalid because it violates the interstate commerce protections in the U.S. Constitution and also argued that Gov. Mike DeWine's line-item vetoes of legislative provisions were improper.



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM

A dispute dating back to the Kasich administration on pharmacy pricing trade secrets will go to oral arguments next month. In 2018, as scrutiny was building over the spread pricing mechanisms used by pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) in their contracts with the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM), the agency released the executive summary of a report by HealthPlan Data Solutions (HDS). It found an 8.8 percent difference between what PBMs paid pharmacies and what they billed to managed care plans. ODM under then-Director Barbara Sears reached an agreement with HDS for public release of the full report, but CaremarkPCS Health, then the PBM for most of Ohio's Medicaid managed care plans, sued to block the release. OptumRx, another PBM used by managed care plans, joined the suit as well. Last week, the 10th District Court of Appeals scheduled the case for oral arguments at 10:45 a.m. Thursday, April 30. Ohio has since instituted a single PBM contract for Medicaid.

Equalizing penalties for theft and program fraud, reinstating GPS tracking for home care, expanding prior authorization and granting his office subpoena authority would help the state crack down on Medicaid misspending, Attorney General Dave Yost told legislators Tuesday. Yost was joined by Auditor Keith Faber and Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) Director Scott Partika for testimony to a joint meeting of the House and Senate Medicaid committees focused on waste, fraud and abuse in the federal-state health care program. Tuesday was the second joint meeting of the two committees since they took over the role of the now-abolished Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee, as spelled out in the budget bill, HB96 (Stewart). Yost asked committee members if they knew that Medicaid fraud penalties are capped at a third-degree felony, whereas a theft of millions of dollars could rise to the level of a first-degree felony.

PENSIONS

Only active and retired teachers opposing pension governance changes were heard Tuesday by appellate judges, who said the state had given up its chance to argue in person. The 10th District Court of Appeals called an oral argument session in litigation over lawmakers' refashioning of the State Teachers Retirement System Board of Trustees. A trial court has blocked provisions of the budget bill, HB96 (Stewart), that would grow the number of political appointees to the board, shrink the number of board seats filled by votes of active and retired educators and bar that latter group of trustees from serving in board leadership positions. Before appellate judges scheduled oral arguments, Attorney General Dave Yost's office had filed a motion to waive oral arguments, in hopes of resolving the case more quickly. The plaintiffs, however, did not agree to the request, and judges scheduled the case for arguments. Judge Laurel Beatty Blunt, presiding for the panel that included Judges Shawn Dingus and Michael Mentel, told representatives of Yost's office that, because of the waiver filing, they would only be



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

hearing from Arlus Stephens, counsel for the plaintiffs. "What we go by is just this notice of waiver of oral argument," said Blunt. "Your case will be submitted on the brief."

Saying he doesn't want his bill to be a debate on what should or should not be done with Ohio's five pension funds, Rep. Jim Hoops (R-Napoleon) said he believes lawmakers need to take a step back after a last-minute change to the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) board was inserted into biennial budget HB96 (Stewart) last year. Hoops testified Wednesday to the House Public Insurance and Pensions Committee on his HB719, which would preserve the structure of the STRS board as it was before the budget changes. Calling himself a "process guy," he said he almost did not vote for HB96 because of the last-minute change. He said the bill takes them back to the beginning of the debate so they can take a better look at all of the pensions, not just STRS. Hoops told the committee that his wife, a teacher, called him about the budget provision and told him not to vote for the bill because of the change. He added that he doesn't necessarily know if the Legislature would ultimately end up in the same place on the STRS board change, but he objects to the process of how it was done.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Reps. Mike Odioso (R-Cincinnati) and Mark Sigrist (D-Grove City) announced new legislation that would strengthen pedestrian protections and increase penalties for serious vehicular offenses. Sigrist said during a press conference that he began working on legislation after an incident in his district where a man was injured while crossing in a crosswalk in a motorized scooter. He was partially paralyzed after he was struck by a car, and Sigrist said he was surprised to learn that the law for Grove City was only a minor misdemeanor, and there was no statewide law. He joined with Odioso, who was working on separate legislation that would clarify the right-of-way for pedestrians as well as driver responsibilities. The two lawmakers said they saw the other's legislation fitting in with their bill, thus leading to the introduction of HB714 (Odioso-Sigrist).

SECRETARY OF STATE

Secretary of State Frank LaRose has been called up to serve with the Ohio National Guard, his office confirmed Thursday. LaRose, a U.S. Army veteran who has served with the 101st Airborne Division and as a Green Beret, joined the Army Reserve in 2021. Further details on LaRose's activation were not released by the state for security reasons. A spokesman for his office said Ohio law requires the assistant secretary of state to act on LaRose's behalf if he's unable to perform his duties. "At this time, that has not been necessary."

STATE GOVERNMENT



THE FITZGIBBON GROUP

association management - government relations - strategic planning

Friday, March 20 marked the three-month mark since a wave of bill signings by Gov. Mike DeWine, making it the effective date for numerous law changes ranging covering topics from property taxation to dangerous dogs to immigration status verification for construction workers. That was the day DeWine signed a suite of property tax reform bills, although the biggest near-term change resulting from those won't be seen until this summer, when some Ohioans' second-half property tax bills will show a credit from HB186 (Hoops-D. Thomas). Otherwise, changes from those laws will largely be felt gradually as properties are re-valued by counties and voters face different types of local funding requests in upcoming elections after certain types were banned. Among other new laws taking effect Friday were the following:

- Dangerous Dog Restrictions - HB247
- Immigration status checks for non-residential contractors - HB246
- Kindergarten age cutoffs - HB114
- Natural gas utility reforms - SB103
- Ending absentee grace period - SB293

TECHNOLOGY/AEROSPACE

House Technology and Innovation Committee Chair Thad Claggett (R-Newark) said in a hearing Tuesday that the Trump administration had recently released its proposed national policy framework for artificial intelligence (AI), saying that is "really important" to some of the committee's work. On announcing the document, the Trump administration said it will only succeed "if it is applied uniformly" and that "a patchwork of conflicting state laws would undermine American innovation and our ability to lead in the global AI race." Claggett said the framework is a "suggestion document" to Congress and "we need to figure this out" as the way and speed in which Congress responds can affect Ohio legislative work as well.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

The Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) Wednesday approved a draft funding list for FY27 that contains 11 new major projects in eight counties that total \$123.1 million. The draft list also includes \$19.5 million for additional project development funding on five projects in TRAC's Tier II status. The public can comment on the draft list by emailing trac@dot.ohio.gov until Thursday, April 16. TRAC will vote on the final list its Thursday, April 23 meeting.