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## **Notice**

In observance of the Thanksgiving holiday, The Hannah Report will not be published Thursday and Friday, Nov. 25 and 26. It will resume publication on Monday, Nov. 29. Subscribers will be notified of any breaking news over that period. Watch the online committee schedule for any additional hearings set for next week.

## **UC Study Estimates Economic Effects of Career-Tech Ed in Jobs, Increased Earnings**

Career-technical education students who complete certification programs earn an average of \$12,323 more than those with only a high school diploma or equivalent five years after starting a program, a gap that increases to \$18,221 after 20 years, according to new research on the economic effects of career-technical education.

The Ohio Association of Career-Technical Superintendents (OACTS) commissioned the study from the University of Cincinnati's (UC) Alpaugh Family Economics Centers. It looked at the benefits to adult students at Ohio technical centers (OTCs) and the economic effects of operations and capital spending at career centers, serving high school students.

The study finds the increased earnings works out to a 2,000-plus percent return-on-investment on the cost of a career-technical investment after 20 years.

"The economic impact study confirms Ohio's career centers and technical centers make a positive difference in the lives of career tech graduates by increasing their earning power which in turn benefits their families," said Margaret Hess, executive director of OACTS, in a statement. "The study also highlights the impact of career technical centers on the economic health of local communities throughout the state of Ohio. CTE is indeed a good investment for Ohio."

The study provides an overview of the types of programs in which Ohio's adult career-tech students are enrolling at OTCs.

In the 2018-2019 academic year, 10,773 adults students enrolled in career-technical education, and a majority of them, 60.1 percent, were women. In that academic year, 7,134 certificates were awarded, with about two-thirds of those taking a year or less to earn.

Health professions made up the bulk of the certificates, 62 percent. The top program was nursing assistant and patient care aide, with 1,251 certificates completed, followed by licensed practical nurse at 1,101 and emergency medical technician at 780. The top 20 programs by certificates completed account for more than 93 percent of all certificates awarded.

The increased earnings projections are also broken out by occupation. The study presents an earnings baseline for a high school graduate of \$33,885 after five years, \$36,710 and \$43,088 after 20, versus averages of \$46,208, \$50,742 and \$61,309 for certificate holders, respectively. The top-paid certificate holders, lineworkers, are projected to make \$106,704 after 20 years. The licensed practical nurse, nursing assistant and patient care aide certificates -- the most popular programs in 2018-2019 -- have projected earnings of \$39,700 after five years, \$43,567 after 10 and \$52,519 after 20. Only cosmetology certificate holders start lower than the high school baseline at \$28,127, but they too exceed it after 20 years, with projected earnings of \$48,995. The study notes, however, the role of tips and discrepancies in reported earnings affect that profession, as does higher turnover.

Adult education certificate holders from the 2018-2019 academic year are estimated to generate an additional \$74.6 million in tax revenue based on their increased earnings, the study states.

In terms of the economic effects of operations at career centers, the study estimates that at \$1.24 billion, \$641 million direct and about \$600 million indirect. The centers support 13,368 jobs, about 9,900 of them directly, and earnings of \$608.8 million, \$424.8 million directly.

Capital improvement spending at career centers spurs \$131.8 million in economic activity and supports more than 1,900 jobs and \$99.2 million in earnings, the study said.

## **Ohio Set to Receive over \$10 Billion from Federal Infrastructure Bill**

Ohio is expected to receive \$9.2 billion for federal-aid highway apportioned programs and \$483 million for bridge replacement repairs under the recent Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, according to the White House.

President Joe Biden signed the bill on Nov. 15 after it cleared Congress. The White House released a fact sheet after the bill signing. In addition to the funds Ohio is expected to receive based on the formula funding, it said Ohio can also compete for funds in the \$12.5 billion Bridge Investment Program for economically significant bridges and nearly \$16 billion of national funding in the bill dedicated for major projects "that will deliver substantial economic benefits to communities."

The bill also includes \$1.2 billion for Ohio over five years to improve public transportation options across the state; \$140 million over five years to support the expansion of electric vehicle charging networks around the state with the chance to apply for grant funding dedicated to EV charging from a \$2.5 billion program; a minimum allocation of \$100 million to help provide broadband across the state; \$26 million over five years to protect against wildfires; \$25 million to protect against cyberattacks; \$1.4 billion over five years to improve water infrastructure across the state; and \$253 million for infrastructure development for airports over five years.

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH), who helped negotiate the bipartisan agreement, said the bill includes funding that will help address the Brent Spence Bridge and other major Ohio infrastructure projects. His office noted that Ohio is second in the nation for the number of bridges, with 44,736 bridges, nearly half of which are not in good condition.

Other provisions his office highlighted in the bill include the following:

- \$1 billion for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.
- \$95 million for Ohio to help finish its section of the Appalachian Development Highway System.

- Makes it easier for power plants and industrial facilities to finance the purchase and installation of carbon capture, utilization, and storage equipment, as well as direct air capture projects through the use of private activity bonds.
- Improves the federal permitting process and gives project sponsors more certainty by making Title 41 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act permanent. The act requires federal agencies to increase transparency and accountability in the federal permitting process and to better coordinate the permitting process for some of the largest infrastructure projects.
- Requires applicants of the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) credit program and Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing (RRIF) loans perform a "value for money analysis" to ensure states are giving public/private partnership financing full and fair consideration.
- Removes the current \$30 million per year cap on the Reforestation Trust Fund, which Portman said will help the U.S. Forest Service plant 1.2 billion trees on national forestland and create 49,000 jobs nationally over the next decade.
- Provides \$21 million in funding for the Office of the National Cyber Director (NCD) which will give the NCD the resources needed to coordinate the implementation of national cybersecurity policy and strategy.

On the U.S. Senate floor, Portman specifically highlighted the Brent Spence Bridge over the Ohio River, saying it has been a bottleneck every day and a fix has been discussed for 25 years.

"We have never been able to figure out how to fix it because we can't accumulate enough money - locally, state, federal - to be able to make the big change that has to occur, which is building another bridge, expanding and fixing up the current one. It's been frustrating. This legislation that was signed today will finally provide the tools to do that. They'll have to apply like any other project around the country. It's a grant that's based on merit, but the grant is specifically focused on major bridges like ours where you have this economic impact that are so called functionally obsolete, meaning they're carrying more traffic than they should be. Ours is carrying twice as much. So it should fit very well," he said.

"But they're going to have to come up with a local match as well. I'm confident that that can be found. The local match will be less now than it would have been before. Before we did have a tough time finding that local match and were not able to move forward. But people in my community, they're ready for this bridge to be fixed," he observed.

Added U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) in a statement, "Today, alongside President Biden, we're showing that we can work together to provide real investments to rebuild and upgrade bridges across the U.S. to make them safer and reduce congestion. This will not only create good-paying American jobs but also make our country more competitive. Ohio has more than 3,200 bridges that need to be repaired or replaced, but states and cities can't do it alone. Today, we're showing we can provide real, bipartisan investments to help us deliver a new Brent Spence Bridge and make travel safer across Ohio."

## **DeWine, Whitmer Place Bet on Ohio State-Michigan Game**

Gov. Mike DeWine and Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer have placed a friendly wager ahead of the rivalry football game between the University of Michigan and Ohio State University.

"With so much on the line in this year's edition of 'The Game,' Fran and I are very excited to see the Buckeyes kick off on Saturday and continue their great rivalry," DeWine said in a news release. "I am proud to engage in this friendly bet, highlighting some of Fran and my favorite treats from across the Buckeye State that we know many Ohioans will be enjoying as they cheer the Buckeyes. O-H!"

DeWine bet an assortment of Ohio-made sweets, including cream puffs from Schmidt's in Columbus, black raspberry chip ice cream from Graeter's in Cincinnati, chocolate-covered pretzels from Malley's in Cleveland, and buckeye candies from Marsha's Homemade Buckeyes in Perrysburg.

"This football game is a time-honored tradition between our two states that pits the best we have to offer against each other for four quarters," Whitmer said. "That's why I'm joining Gov. DeWine to bet some of

the best Michigan-made sweets and treats that our state has to offer from Cherry Republic. With everything on the line for a trip to the Big 10 Championship game, I can't wait to cheer on the Wolverines. Go Blue!"

Whitmer wagered a gift package of famous Michigan-made cherry treats from Cherry Republic in Glen Arbor.

On Saturday, Nov. 27 at noon, the Ohio State Buckeyes will face the Michigan Wolverines for the 117th meeting of "The Game." Michigan cancelled the 2020 game with Ohio State due to a COVID-19 outbreak among the Wolverines.

Ohio State has won the last eight games in the series.

## **Thanksgiving Travel Expected to Be Highest Since 2005**

Nearly 2.2 million Ohioans are expected to travel for the Thanksgiving holiday this year, according to AAA Ohio and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). It is the highest predicted number of Ohioans traveling between Wednesday, Nov. 24, and Sunday, Nov 28, since 2005.

AAA said nearly 90 percent of the travelers are driving to their destination, which will create congested roadways, especially on Wednesday and Sunday in the afternoon and evening.

ODOT said it will be suspending roadwork and opening as many lanes as possible this weekend. However, work zones on I-75 in Toledo, Dayton and Cincinnati, I-70 in Springfield and Zanesville, I-70/71 in downtown Columbus, and I-76 and I-77 in Akron are among those where drivers could encounter delays. ODOT said drivers should pay extra attention while driving through work zones and allow additional time to reach their destination.

A map of all active work zones, updated traffic conditions, and nearly 1,000 live traffic cameras are available at OHGO.com or on the OHGO app.

ODOT said it will also use more than 130 digital message boards to reinforce safe driving behaviors like driving sober, buckling up, obeying the speed limit and dropping distractions.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol reminds motorists to buckle up, never drive impaired and always follow traffic laws. Last year during the Thanksgiving holiday reporting period, there were 11 fatal crashes that killed 11 people on Ohio's roadways. Five of those fatalities were the result of impaired driving, and four were unbuckled when a seatbelt was available. Troopers will have an increased presence on Ohio's roadways to promote a safe Thanksgiving holiday, the patrol said.

AAA said travelers should ensure their vehicles are road trip ready to avoid breakdowns. The auto club said it expects to respond to more than 400,000 roadside assistance calls this weekend.

## **Quinnipiac: Most Aim to Avoid Thanksgiving Political Talk, Maintain Charitable Donations**

Two-thirds of those surveyed in a new Quinnipiac University poll hope to avoid political discussions around the Thanksgiving table this week, while 21 percent look forward to mixing it up with their families on the subject.

Eight percent said they were neither looking forward to or hoping to avoid such discussions, 3 percent didn't know or wouldn't answer, and 1 percent were not planning to visit family.

Proportions did not swing much from the 66-21 split when looking at different demographic groups. Republicans and Independents were slightly more likely to want to avoid talking politics at 68 and 69 percent, respectively, compared to 66 percent of Democrats. Men were slightly less likely to want to avoid it at 63 percent, versus women at 69 percent. When accounting for education level, the number moved

just two points in either direction for those with college degrees (64 percent) and those without (68) percent.

Those 65-and-older population was slightly less likely to want to avoid political talk, with 61 percent wanting to avoid it, while other age groups were above the general 66 percent.

Half said a heated political debate is not likely at all, while 9 percent said it's very likely. In the middle, 24 percent said not so likely, and 15 percent, somewhat likely.

Regarding charitable giving, 70 percent of those surveyed said they plan to give about the same amount to charity as last year, while 19 percent planned to give more and 7 percent, less. The proportion of those looking to maintain giving levels differed only by a point or two when looking at political affiliation, gender and education level.

Among those planning to give more, 28 percent said they wanted to give a lot more, while 50 percent said somewhat more and 20 percent, a little more.

## **State Government Roundup**

### **Statehouse Holiday Festival, Tree Lighting Set for Next Week**

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory (CSRAB) has announced the Ohio Statehouse Holiday Festival and Tree Lighting will take place Thursday, Dec. 2 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The celebration is free, family-friendly and open to the public.

The festival marks the beginning of the holiday season on Capitol Square and throughout Central Ohio. The Tree Lighting ceremony in the Statehouse Atrium consists of a brief program. Gov. Mike DeWine and First Lady Fran DeWine will welcome Santa and Mrs. Claus, and will light the historically decorated Ohio Statehouse holiday tree, CSRAB explained.

The Holiday Festival will continue with complimentary cookies, arts and crafts activities, games and special performances by local choirs and dancers from OhioDance and Drake Dance Academy. The Ohio State Highway Patrol will demonstrate the K-9 unit. There will also be a free photo station available to capture family moments with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Refreshments will be courtesy of the Berwick, Cameron Mitchell Premier Events, Freedom a la Cart, L.A. Catering, Metro Cuisine Catering & Special Events, Milo's Catering and Banquet Services, and Together & Company.

Parking is available during the event in the Ohio Statehouse underground parking garage. Parking rates are available [HERE](#).

### **Computer Science Committee Seeks Public Input**

Following its first meeting (see The Hannah Report, 11/22/21), the State Committee on Computer Science invited Ohioans to offer input on how the state can become a "national leader" in computer science education. Chair Mike Duffey had discussed that as the committee's goal in the meeting.

State residents are asked to send ideas to [computerscience@education.ohio.gov](mailto:computerscience@education.ohio.gov) by Thursday, Dec. 2, and they will be compiled and shared with the committee before its Wednesday, Dec. 15 meeting. Ideas will also be accepted on a rolling basis for future meetings.

"The State Committee on Computer Science includes 26 members from across the state, from Celina to Cincinnati, from Athens to Columbus and Cleveland," Duffey said in the release. "We are asking Ohioans with an interest in computer science to answer this question and send two or three ideas to the committee. We want to give a voice to all Ohioans regarding computer science and the impact it can have on Ohio's future economic competitiveness. We know there are many more voices among industry, education and Ohio's families with ideas to suggest."

"One key to the success of this committee will be how well we are able to build on the existing computer science skill, talent and knowledge base Ohio already has," added Vice Chair John Wiseman.

"Fortunately, there are amazing things happening all over the state in the field of computer science and we hope to be able to use that foundation as a starting point to position Ohioans as leaders in this area of study well into the future."

### **OWT Awards \$13.5M to School Workforce Programs**

Grants totaling \$13.5 million will be provided to 54 school districts as part of the Innovative Workforce Incentive Program, according to a Tuesday announcement from Lt. Gov. Jon Husted. The funds help establish new programs for students to earn industry-recognized credentials in priority industry sectors, according to a release from Husted's office and the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation (OWT).

"This funding will help more high school students earn in-demand career credentials that lead to quality, higher-paying jobs without the steep cost and debt that comes with many college pathways," said Husted, who is also the director of OWT. "Career credentials are what an increasing number of businesses look for when making hiring decisions, and individual Ohioans and the Ohio economy benefit when more high school students graduate career-ready."

The recipients are located around the state and provide a variety of credentials to students, according to the release. Funds can be used for equipment, instructional materials, facilities and operational costs.

Stephanie Siddens, interim state superintendent of public instruction, said the school programs will "open doors for our students to learn the skills they need to succeed in our state's most in-demand industries." She continued that the programs selected are "a major contributor to the success of our students."

More information on the program and recipients is available [HERE](#).

## **Ohio Digest**

### **Groundwork Report Looks at Mental Health of Young Children**

While many groups have highlighted the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on school age children, a recently released report from Groundwork Ohio's Center for Maternal and Young Child Health looks at the mental health needs of babies, toddlers and preschool age children that are often overlooked.

Critical brain development takes place in the first few years of a child's life, and it is during these critical years that children are highly vulnerable to adversity. The report identifies ways the state can promote better early childhood mental health, prevent trauma and treat mental health problems before they become more serious problems later in life.

The Health Policy Institute of Ohio's (HPIO) 2021 Health Value Dashboard found Ohio ranks poorly on key indicators of early child health and well-being in comparison to other states. Ohio ranked in the bottom half of states on measures like infant mortality and low birth weight as well as child poverty and housing with a lead risk.

The report highlights different areas where Ohio can improve, which includes raising more awareness of the issue through public campaigns and educating state policymakers; increasing funding and supporting access to treatment for low-income pregnant women as young children; and improving the workforce capacity across the state.

## Campus Chronicle

### **OSU Plans to Raise \$800M in Pursuit of Debt-Free Bachelor's Degree**

Ohio State University (OSU) President Kristina M. Johnson announced plans for the university to offer a debt-free bachelor's degree within a decade.

Johnson shared details of the Scarlet & Gray Advantage plan during her investiture address on Friday, Nov. 19. The ceremony marked Johnson's formal installation as OSU's 16th president.

The university plans to raise \$800 million for student scholarships; to expand job and internship programs that allow students to gain experience while earning a paycheck; provide grant assistance; and extend coaching on financial education, leadership and work skills.

"Students who join Scarlet & Gray Advantage will be active participants in achieving a debt-free degree through a joint commitment with the university. Ohio State will provide financial aid for low- and middle-income students, coupled with work opportunities and programs to help students develop financial literacy. Students will be expected to participate in financial literacy programs, take advantage of work opportunities and join a cohort of like-minded students focused on a debt-free education," the university stated.

In fall 2022, the university said it will select 125 new first-year students to be part of a Scarlet & Gray Advantage pilot program. Details about how the cohort will be selected will be determined next year as the incoming class takes shape.

OSU, which hosts more than 53,000 undergraduate students, said about 47 percent of student graduate with debt -- owing on average about \$27,000, which is similar to national averages for students completing four-year degrees.

While bringing the Scarlet & Gray Advantage program up to scale, OSU said it is taking immediate steps to:

- Expand financial support for students. Ohio State will raise \$800 million, including \$500 million in endowments, over the next decade to expand undergraduate scholarships. To help kick off this campaign, the university and lead donors are creating a \$50 million pool to match the first \$50 million in private donations. Donors who contribute at least \$100,000 to endowed funds while the match is available will see their gifts double in size.
- Create more work opportunities. Ohio State plans to expand its network of paid job and internship opportunities so that students have more opportunities to earn money, develop job skills and prepare themselves for post-college careers.
- Enhance financial literacy. Scarlet & Gray Advantage students will participate in financial literacy programs, leadership and career counseling, and other programs meant to aid their success.

Executive Vice President and Provost Melissa L. Gilliam noted that concerns about college debt can also discourage some high-school students from attending college.

"No one should be deterred from becoming a Buckeye because of their financial situation," said Gilliam. "We are determined to attract talented students throughout Ohio, the nation and the world to Ohio State, and prepare them to solve problems, identify opportunities and uplift communities when they graduate. This program reflects the power of our land-grant mission."

More information about the program is available at <https://advantage.osu.edu/>.

### **UD to Build New Visual, Performing Arts Center**

The University of Dayton's (UD) first building dedicated to visual and performing arts will be named for local entrepreneur and philanthropist Roger Glass, president and CEO of Marion's Piazza.

The "Roger Glass Center for the Arts" is meant to provide greater connection with the Dayton community through concerts, dance and theater performances, and art exhibits featuring students, faculty, visiting

artists, and community members, the university said. Glass, who holds a bachelor's degree in communication arts from UD, is the lead donor on the project.

"When I went to UD, everything was scattered," Glass said. "This is an opportunity for all of the arts at UD to come together and have an amazing place to display their talents. Not only the university but the community will be able to take advantage of the center for the arts."

The \$45 million, 51,000-square-foot center will include flexible space for theater, dance and performance technology; a 400-seat concert hall that can be acoustically tuned to groups ranging from the orchestra to smaller ensembles; and a visible and accessible art gallery. The center also will provide custom-built experiential learning space for student-managed media, such as Flyer News, Flyer TV and Flyer Radio. Student demand for the academic and experiential learning programs to be featured in the Roger Glass Center has been growing stronger for many years, UD said.

"The great thing about the facility, and really the great thing about arts at the University of Dayton, is there are so many students involved from all areas -- engineers in our orchestra and English majors in our acting troupe," said President Eric F. Spina. "The arts have really grown here, and the students need a facility like this. It's a gift to our students, to the university, and to the community, and we thank Roger for his generosity in making this facility possible."

The project will also make use of a former brownfield the university purchased from NCR when the company left Dayton. The center, designed to meet LEED-gold environmental standards, was designed in consultation with local arts organizations to complement existing venues in the region. The concert hall and other assets of the center are new for campus and the university hopes they will help recruit students interested in the arts.

The project has support from 120 donors, including Martha M. Walter, whose 2002 bequest for a future arts center was critical to making the facility possible, the university said. Donors also include faculty and staff who wished to support the vision for the arts center.

The university's Board of Trustees approved the project Nov. 15, and construction is expected to begin almost immediately. The facility is tentatively scheduled to open for the 2023-24 academic year.

## **Week In Review**

### **ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

Ohio's estimated drug overdose deaths reached 5,558 during the pandemic, according to new statistics released recently by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a jump of nearly 27 percent. The CDC released the updated data which tracked deaths from May 2020 to April 2021, finding the number of deaths over the year was an increase of 26.6 percent from 4,410 the year before, though the CDC noted the data is incomplete. The previous high for Ohio during a 12-month period occurred from July 2016 to July 2017, when there were an estimated 5,293 deaths.

### **ATTORNEY GENERAL**

Ohio is joining a 14-state lawsuit to stop federal enforcement of President Joe Biden's COVID-19 vaccine mandate on health care employees. Attorney General Dave Yost announced Tuesday that Ohio had been added to the plaintiffs in *State of Louisiana et al v. Secretary of Health and Human Services et al*, filed recently in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana to challenge the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' authority to require the vaccine of health care workers. "Ohio operates state-run health care facilities that receive both Medicare and Medicaid funding and are subject to the vaccine mandate," Yost states in Monday's filing. He says the Biden administration's vaccine mandate affects as many as 17 million Americans working full and part-time at hospitals, nursing facilities, hospices and home health agencies.

## **BUSINESS/CORPORATE**

With 14,140 new business filings in October, Ohio entrepreneurs are close to breaking the record total for 2020 with two full months remaining to create a business, according to Secretary of State Frank LaRose. Ohioans have submitted a total of 170,740 new business filings through October this year, versus last year's record of 171,073 new filings from January to December, the secretary of state said.

Retail sales during the holiday season are projected to increase by 7.3 percent this year, rising from \$29.3 billion to \$31.4 billion, according to a Tuesday report from the Ohio Council of Retail Merchants (OCRM). OCRM's research affiliate, Focus on Ohio's Future, prepared the report with the University of Cincinnati (UC) Economics Center. Calling the projection "robust," UC Economics Center Co-Director Christopher Nicak said it comes in part from a 4 percent increase in wages and salaries over 2020, from \$309.9 billion in Q1 2020 to \$322.2 billion in Q2 2021.

## **CORONAVIRUS**

The state is experiencing another surge of coronavirus cases and hospitalizations as Ohioans prepare to gather for Thanksgiving for this week, Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff said Tuesday. "We are heading into the winter with very high levels of disease transmission, and over the last couple of weeks, a definite upturn in the number of cases and the number of hospitalizations. Essentially, we are heading into the winter already in a surge," Vanderhoff told reporters during a virtual press conference. "Think about where we are in terms of the total number of positive cases," he continued. "The threshold per 100,000 is 100 cases per 100,000, and we are many times above that, both at a state level and in each and every individual county level. COVID is everywhere. It is still demonstrating an ability to spread very quickly, most especially among people who aren't protected by the vaccine." The statewide transmission rate for the most recent reporting period (pulled Nov. 18) is 496.3 cases per 100,000 population, according to ODH. That is up from 410.5 a week before (Nov. 11), and 354.3 two weeks before (Nov. 4).

In the most recent reporting period, there are 11 counties with more than 800 cases per 100,000 population including Sandusky (804.9), Fayette (830.9), Henry (877.6), Fulton (904.4), Seneca (915.2), Ashtabula (929.6), Putnam (942.1), Allen (976.1), Defiance (976.7), Van Wert (1,092.8) and Williams (1,092.9).

The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided approvals necessary Friday for any U.S. adult to be eligible for a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. The Ohio Department of Health said those who originally received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine are eligible for a single booster dose two months following their original dose; those who received Moderna or Pfizer/Comirnaty will be eligible six months after receiving their second dose, which completed the original vaccine series. Fully vaccinated adults can choose any of the three authorized COVID-19 vaccines for their booster dose.

The availability of COVID-19 booster shots for all adults and initial vaccines for young children has heightened demand for jabs across the state, Ohio Department of Health (ODH) officials told members of the Controlling Board on Monday. Those factors led to ODH's seeking a \$400,000 increase to its current vaccine distribution contract with Cardinal Health, ODH Procurement Chief Paul Maragos and ODH Warehouse Manager Dave Holston told Rep. Shane Wilkin (R-Hillsboro). The request was approved.

According to AARP Ohio, nearly 60 percent of nursing home staff were vaccinated against COVID-19 in October, a slight increase over the previous month. AARP, which tracks the vaccination of nursing home staff and residents through its Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard, said 59.2 percent of staff were fully vaccinated as of Oct. 17. Nationally, it said 7 percent more nursing staff were vaccinated over the previous month, the largest monthly increase since the group began tracking vaccination rates.

Nationwide, about 74 percent of nursing home staff are vaccinated. The Biden administration has recently released a federal rule that requires all health care workers in facilities that participate in Medicare and Medicaid to be fully vaccinated by Jan. 4, 2022.

## **ELECTIONS**

Secretary of State Frank LaRose notified the Summit County Board of Elections that he is releasing the board from administrative oversight, saying the board had improved its human resource management, elections administration, and quality of service to voters. LaRose had put the board into oversight earlier this year, saying "significant deficiencies were determined where board members did not provide the standard of competence necessary to continue serving in their respective role." He also rejected at the time the appointment of Summit County Republican Party Chairman Bryan Williams to the board, resulting in a lawsuit by Williams that led the Ohio Supreme Court to unanimously order Williams' appointment to be reinstated.

## **ELECTIONS 2022**

With the passage of new congressional map SB258 (McColley) last week, U.S. Rep. Bob Latta (R-Bowling Green) said he will be running for re-election in the redrawn 5th Congressional District. The district spans from Mercer County on the Indiana border to Lorain County. Latta's home of Bowling Green sits near the middle of the district. In his announcement, Latta noted that he currently, or has previously, represented 10 of the 11 counties comprising the new version of the district.

Rep. Shane Wilkin (R-Hillsboro) announced Monday that he will run for the 17th Ohio Senate District in 2022. The seat will be open due to term limits for Sen. Bob Peterson (R-Sabina). Wilkin, who is in his second term representing the 91st Ohio House District, previously served three terms as Highland County commissioner.

## **ENERGY**

Gov. Mike DeWine is urging President Joe Biden to intervene in Michigan's Enbridge pipeline dispute with Canada to spare the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes states from a major economic blow as the nation recovers from COVID-19. DeWine and Lt Gov. Jon Husted wrote Biden a letter dated Friday, Nov. 19 to explain Line 5's importance to the region. The governor says Ohio would lose roughly 20,000 jobs and \$13.7 billion in economic activity, with Michigan, Indiana and Pennsylvania facing a combined loss of 33,755 jobs and \$20.8 billion. Those figures would have "widespread implications" for the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes region's gross state product (GSP), worker earnings and tax revenues.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Manganese, a naturally occurring mineral that is used in various industries in Ohio and across the U.S., must be kept in check by water systems to avoid discoloration, poor taste and odor, according to researchers. "It only takes a fraction of a milligram per liter, in terms of concentration, before the water looks yellow," said Craig Stow, an aquatic ecosystems expert with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Stow was one of several water quality experts hosted by Ohio Sea Grant for a webinar series this fall.

## **FEDERAL**

Vice President Kamala Harris visited Columbus Friday along with U.S. Department of Labor Secretary Marty Walsh to tour and speak at a union hall. Harris and Walsh visited Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 189 and met with people in an apprenticeship program. Ohio Democratic Party Chair Elizabeth Walters praised the vice president's visit as a chance to celebrate the recently passed federal infrastructure

spending measure, noting billions of dollars are set to flow to Ohio for roads, bridges, water, sewer and broadband projects.

Gov. Mike DeWine is suspending pre-approval requirements for heavier truck loads as part of a joint effort among numerous governors to address supply chain issues during the holiday season, an effort in which they're also urging federal action. DeWine's office said he's directed the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to resume the pandemic-era practice of allowing trucks to haul loads of up to 90,000 pounds so long as they report where they traveled after their trips, suspending the requirement for pre-approval of shipments over 80,000 pounds. "Supply chain issues have led to shortages of raw materials and goods from factories to stores, and simple actions, like modifying weight limits, adjusting hours of service for truck drivers, and removing some non-safety-related restrictions on commercial drivers licenses will help ease a record-shortage of truck drivers and allow more goods to flow to market," said DeWine in a statement. "I'm calling on President Biden to review and revise any federal regulations that are hindering our efforts."

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE**

With work on a congressional redistricting bill wrapped up this week well ahead of the Nov. 30 constitutional deadline, the House and Senate both cleared the calendar of sessions scheduled near that date. Sessions scheduled for both chambers Monday, Nov. 29, Tuesday, Nov. 30 and Wednesday, Dec. 1 were cancelled, and the House likewise cancelled a Thursday, Dec. 2 session. Both chambers are next scheduled to meet Wednesday, Dec. 8.

## **HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS**

Home sales of 15,731 in October marked a 1.4 percent decline from figures a year earlier, but the average sales price was well ahead of what it was in October 2020, according to Ohio Realtors. The average price was \$240,509, an 8.2 percent increase from the \$222,216 seen in October 2020.

## **MARIJUANA/HEMP**

A "streamlined" process for businesses to submit new cannabis products for state agency review will be implemented on Wednesday, Dec. 1, according to the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program (MMCP). The new process is intended to help the Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) and Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) review the submissions more efficiently, MMCP said. "The goal of the updated process is for licensees to provide more information up front regarding their new product concepts to support DOC and OBP coordination and a more efficient review and approval of product item ID, packaging and labeling, and advertising submissions," MMCP said. "In addition, the process will ensure that licensees have received a product item ID approval before they incur packaging, labeling and advertising costs ahead of introducing a new product to market."

## **MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM**

Ohio recently updated its plans for how to spend additional funding for home- and community-based services (HCBS) provided in the federal American Rescue Plan Act, aiming among other uses to make one-time relief payments to providers in light of the difficulties caused by the pandemic. The Ohio Department of Medicaid's (ODM) plan, developed in conjunction with other state agencies involved in the work, covers \$964 million in proposed spending in the areas of provider workforce relief; technology enhancement; workforce supports; and other program and system enhancements. Workforce relief constitutes the bulk of the funding plan, at \$469 million-plus or 49 percent of the total, with providers to receive funding totaling 10 percent of their 2021 revenue. Those providers will be required to put the money toward retention and signing bonus payments for staff. The plan proposes \$212 million in workforce supports to help address shortages in the workforce affecting ODM, the Ohio Department of

Mental Health and Addiction Services, Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and Ohio Department of Aging.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) announced Monday that the state had received a Government Experience Project award from the Center for Digital Government for its 2020 redesign of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) website. The new website, which leverages the DAS-managed, InnovateOhio platform, allows visitors to use location-based searching for trip planning in a 10-, 20- or 50-mile radius. More than six million visitors have used the site to plan a trip to an ODNR property, with searches by activity and amenity as well. A DAS newsletter added that the site, which is accessible on mobile devices, also centralizes news, events and help resources. Such information was previously separated across ODNR's 11 divisions.

The ODNR Division of Geological Survey is now accepting applications for the Ohio Geology Student Research Grant program. For a seventh academic year, the program will support graduate and undergraduate students who conduct geologic research in the state, according to ODNR. The division will award grants of \$2,500 to three earth science students at Ohio colleges and universities. Each grantee will be selected based on the quality of their application, the strength of their professor's letter of recommendation, and the relevancy of their proposed research.

The ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves has named its 140th state nature preserve. Coyote Run will have 230 acres of preserved natural lands in Fairfield County, thanks to conservation enthusiasts and property owners David Hague and Tammy Miller, ODNR said.

An estimated 300,000 hunters will make their way to the state's forests and fields during the 2021 deer-gun hunting season, according to the ODNR Division of Wildlife. The 2021 weeklong deer-gun season begins on Monday, Nov. 29 and lasts through Sunday, Dec. 5. There is also a deer-gun weekend on Dec. 18-19. The 2021 youth deer-gun hunting season took place the weekend of Nov. 20-21, with young hunters aged 17 and under harvesting 7,634 deer, a significant increase from 2020, ODNR said.

## **POLLS/STUDIES**

A significant majority of Americans -- regardless of political affiliation -- believe the U.S. Supreme Court's decisions are primarily driven by politics, not legal reasoning, according to a national poll from Quinnipiac University. Sixty-one percent of the poll's respondents said the U.S. Supreme Court is mainly motivated by politics, while 32 percent said it's mainly motivated by the law. Democrats said 67 percent to 27 percent, Independents said 62 percent to 31 percent, and Republicans said 56 percent to 39 percent that the U.S. Supreme Court is mainly motivated by politics.

The poll found that nearly half of Americans (49 percent) oppose stricter gun laws in the U.S., while 45 percent support stricter gun laws. Republicans oppose stricter guns laws 84 percent to 13 percent, Independents oppose stricter gun laws 54 percent to 39 percent, while Democrats support stricter gun laws 91 percent to 7 percent. Among registered voters, 48 percent oppose stricter gun laws, while 47 percent support stricter gun laws.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

From standardizing the process of decertifying police officers over serious misconduct to curtailing no-knock warrants to wrangling with thorny union bargaining issues, lawmakers from a handful of states addressed their legislatures' responses to the wave of calls for policing reforms after George Floyd's murder and other incidents during a recent panel at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) conference in Florida. Speakers included Walter Katz, vice president for Criminal Justice at Arnold Ventures, Sen. Whitney Westerfield of Kentucky, Rep. John Spiros of Wisconsin and Rep. Roger Goodman of Washington state. Westerfield, who moderated the discussion, noted the scale of legislative

activity on policing, as evidenced by NCSL's cataloging of bills. "The database on this subject matter alone is enormous. The number of bills that have been filed and considered and proposed in states from one end of the nation to another is enormous," he said.

Citing the "mental, emotional and physical" toll of events such as murders, fires and accidents, Gov. Mike DeWine announced Monday that a new Office of First Responder Wellness has been created within the Ohio Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Office of Criminal Justice Services. It will support law enforcement, fire, EMS, dispatch, corrections and Ohio-based military personnel with specialized support and training to help agencies "proactively address post-traumatic stress and other traumas caused by factors that are unique to first-responder careers." The office will work with local and state mental health agencies, including the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS), to give "continuing, comprehensive resources" to first responder entities.

Gov. Mike DeWine, joining Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) Superintendent Col. Richard Fambro and a new class of uniformed cadets at the highway patrol academy in Columbus on Tuesday, said he would provide the patrol \$15 million over five years for body cameras, video storage equipment, maintenance and user training. "Body-worn cameras have become a standard tool for law enforcement," DeWine said, reinforcing troopers' and citizens' need for safety, trust and transparency. The governor had asked Fambro to design the program and solicit technology proposals last year. He noted OSHP has had dash- and rear-seat cameras for more than two decades and would be integrating body-cams into current protocols, starting with Columbus headquarters and followed by Bucyrus, Cambridge, Cleveland, Findlay, Jackson, Piqua, Warren and Wilmington patrol districts through May 2022.

## **REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT**

Gov. Mike DeWine Saturday morning signed SB258 (McColley), which sets congressional boundaries for Ohio's 15 congressional districts for the next four years, though some groups have suggested they will challenge the map in court. The new map was introduced a week ago by Senate Republicans, and quickly moved through the Senate and House over the week despite the objections of legislative Democrats and voting rights groups. The General Assembly had until Tuesday, Nov. 30, to adopt a new map. DeWine, who previously suggested maps first introduced by each of the legislative caucuses would not pass constitutional muster, said on Saturday in a written statement that he thought the new version of SB258 was the best offered by any of them.

The new congressional redistricting map that was passed last week by the General Assembly and signed by Gov. Mike DeWine as a part of SB258 (McColley) on Saturday was challenged in the Ohio Supreme Court Monday evening by 12 Ohio voters working with a national redistricting group started by former Attorney General Eric Holder. The lawsuit, supported by Holder's National Redistricting Action Fund (NRAF), argues that the map is a partisan gerrymander in violation of the Ohio Constitution's Article XIX, which states that when passing a map without bipartisan support, the General Assembly "shall not pass a plan that unduly favors or disfavors a political party or its incumbents" and "shall not unduly split governmental units."

Gov. Mike DeWine focused on congressional district "competitiveness" Tuesday -- a criterion missing from 2018's Issue 1 redistricting language -- in defending the U.S. House map of newly signed SB258 (McColley). The governor dismissed Democratic opposition to the congressional map at a press conference.

## **TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE**

Motorcycle Ohio announced earlier this month that \$2.5 million in funding is available for government agencies and nonprofit organizations that are interested in offering certified motorcycle rider training. A division of the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV), Motorcycle Ohio establishes motorcycle safety and

education programs to provide affordable motorcycle rider training courses in order to reduce fatalities and injuries on Ohio's roadways through rider education, public information campaigns and licensing improvement.

## **UTILITIES**

The Ohio Attorney General's Office says auditors hired by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) to probe invalidated FirstEnergy charges provided the commission no "updates" of their interim summary during a six-month contract period. The AG says the Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel's (OCC) request for the never-released audit and/or related communiques between FirstEnergy, the auditor and PUCO is therefore pointless. OCC had asked PUCO for Oxford Advisors' final audit report and related communications in October after an undated text from former FirstEnergy CEO Chuck Jones surfaced indicating commission staff had begun to question Randazzo's treatment of the utility. Led by Randazzo, Commissioners Beth Trombold, Lawrence Friedeman, Daniel Conway and Dennis Deters followed by dismissing the audit case without a final report after the Ohio Supreme Court overturned FirstEnergy charges.

## **WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation's (BWC) investment portfolio was valued at \$22.37 billion as of June 30, down from \$25.89 billion on June 30, 2020, according to BWC's FY21 annual investment report. "This [\$3.52 billion] decrease was largely the result of pandemic-related special dividends distributed to eligible employers totaling approximately \$6.2 billion during October-December 2020," says the report, which was approved by the BWC Board of Directors on Friday. "The BWC investment portfolio had a FY21 total return (net of management fees) of 15.2 percent and net investment income of \$3.46 billion," the report says.

During her remarks to the board, BWC Administrator/CEO Stephanie McCloud said after meeting with union and management representatives, the agency set a "return to office" date of Monday, Jan. 3, 2022.

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