



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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Annexation bill receives changes aligned with CCAO recommendations

[House Bill 113](#) (Representatives Bird and Newman) makes changes to several provisions of annexation law. During this week's hearing in the House Local Government Committee, a new version of the bill was adopted that incorporates recommendations from CCAO.

The changes made this week apply to all expedited annexations, aspects of Type II expedited annexations, what school district is responsible for annexed territory. The substitute bill also makes a change to a provision of the bill concerning residential community reinvestment area (CRA) exemptions.

Under the new version of the bill, the board of county commissioners will only be given authority to deny an expedited annexation request if the territory proposed for annexation is in a different county than the county (or counties) that is home to the majority of the annexing municipality.

For example, if a municipality has 50,000 residents in County A and 2,500 in County B and attempts to annex territory in County B through the expedited process, the board of county commissioners could deny the annexation.

A provision in the original bill that would require the annexing municipality in Type II expedited annexation to provide services to the new territory "at an approximate date" was replaced with one that requires the services to be provided no later than any planned new construction begins.

Unrelated to annexation, a provision of the original bill that would have required approval from the school district of record before a residential CRA exemption could be granted was changed to instead require approval from the board of county commissioners. However, if the exemption is for 75% or less of the tax liability or if the board of county commissioners waives approval, the exemption is automatically granted.

Finally, provisions regarding the maximum amount of acreage that can be annexed and the amount of contiguous boundary that is required to be annexed under a Type II annexation were removed from the bill. Also removed were provisions that would require a transfer of territory from one school district to another after a Type II annexation.

The changes made this week are largely reflective of recommendations that CCAO had developed and shared with Representatives Bird and Newman last year.

CCAO provides testimony on Local Government Expenditure Database bill

This week in the House Technology and Innovation Committee, [House Bill 413](#) (Representatives Tom Young and Bob Peterson) received its third hearing. HB 413 creates the Ohio Local Government Expenditure Database and requires many local governments to participate in the database by submitting revenue and expenditure data. The database would function analogously to the Ohio Checkbook.

The bill appropriates \$5 million to the Treasurer of State to create and maintain the database but does not include any funding to assist local governments.

[CCAO Managing Director of Policy Adam Schwiebert provided interested party testimony](#) to the committee. In the testimony, Schwiebert stressed that counties support transparency and have no philosophical issue with the bill. That said, the Association has concerns about the bill in its current form.

CCAO's testimony included the following recommendations:

- Design the required data fields and reporting formats to maximize interoperability with existing county accounting and financial systems.
- Specify reasonable reporting intervals.
- Allow counties with existing financial transparency systems to provide links via the database to their own systems.
- Provide a reasonable implementation period once reporting requirements are finalized by administrative rule.

Last but not least, the Association requested funding assistance or technical support to help counties with system integration and compliance costs. Any time that standardization occurs, there are costs to bring systems in line. This could potentially require counties to procure entirely new software and licenses.

A one-time appropriation of state funds to assist counties come online to a statewide system would allow county taxpayer funds to continue providing services. Additionally, in recent years the state has provided funding for digitalization of county recorder records and court of common pleas records, so there is precedent for the state assisting with technology modernization efforts.

House Local Government accepts substitute bills of interest to counties

In addition to the changes to HB 113, the House Local Government Committee accepted new versions of two other bills that CCAO has been monitoring. The bills concern fire hydrant maintenance and government efficiency committees.

Fire Hydrant Maintenance Plans (HB 139)

[House Bill 413](#) (Representative Thomas Hall) requires political subdivisions that own, operate, or maintain fire hydrant systems or other associated infrastructure to develop a maintenance plan. The plan must include a schedule for inspection, testing, and regular maintenance.

The substitute bill adopted this week changes the requirement that the political subdivision “adopt” the plan to a requirement that the subdivision “establish” the plan. It also extends this requirement to public water system operators.

The new version of the bill also specifies that the existence of fire hydrant maintenance plan does not affect, limit, diminish, or impair existing civil immunity or liability law.

Blue Ribbon Committee on Government Efficiency (HB 520)

[House Bill 520](#) (Representatives Ty Mathews and David Thomas) creates a “Blue Ribbon Committee” in each county to review and assess taxing units within the county to identify potential consolidation that would result in taxpayer savings, county programs and departments to identify duplication of services and potential streamline opportunities, and each other public service and district to identify potential consolidations.

The substitute bill adopted this week fully incorporates a prior change which altered the composition of the committee with respect to townships, municipalities, and schools and also allows the committee to alter its size and composition by majority vote.

The new version of the bill also allows the committee, by majority vote, to expand its purview to include “the review, assessment, and investigation of other matters related to local government within the county.”

Legislative Activity

Committee Hearings

The following committees held hearings this week regarding bills that may interest counties.

House Children and Human Services

- [House Bill 532](#) (Representative Kevin Miller): To require a public children services agency to take immediate custody of specified children who cannot be released to a parent, guardian, or custodian.
 - Fourth hearing, all testimony

- **SUBSTITUTE BILL ADOPTED** to change the wording throughout from “custody” to “care.”

Introduction of Bills

The following bill(s) that may be of interest to counties were introduced this week:

- [House Bill 673](#) (Representatives Jason Stephens): To expand the statewide owner-occupied residence property tax credit to all tax levies.
- [House Bill 676](#) (Representatives David Thomas and Rodney Creech): To establish regulations regarding wolfdog hybrids and to allow a board of county commissioners to abate certain animal nuisances.
- [Senate Bill 351](#) (Senator Nate Manning): To allow an active duty service member on deployment, and who is a member of a public body in the state, to attend meetings of the public body virtually.

Upcoming Committee Hearings

The following committees are currently scheduled to meet and discuss bills that may be of interest to counties. Other committees will likely meet as well, but as of press time for Statehouse Report, they have not released agendas. Please note that these schedules are subject to change.

If you would like to offer testimony on any bill, please visit the committee page and contact the committee chair’s office for instructions on how to submit testimony.

Tuesday, February 10

[Senate Ways and Means](#) (11:00 a.m.)

- [Senate Bill 307](#) (Senator Jane Timken): To allow funding for police and firefighting facilities in tax increment financing arrangements.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony
- [Senate Bill 285](#) (Senator Tim Schaffer): To exempt agricultural land converted to certain conservation uses from recoupment charges.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony

[Senate General Government](#) (2:00 p.m.)

- [Senate Joint Resolution 7](#) (Senator Bill Blessing, III): Proposing to amend the Constitution of the State of Ohio to authorize land value taxes.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony
- [Senate Bill 262](#) (Senator Bill Blessing, III): To require a public authority or other party to a construction contract to note variations from an industry standard form.
 - Third hearing, all testimony

[Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources](#) (3:30 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 329](#) (Senators Paula Hicks-Hudson and Kent Smith): To expressly prohibit the surface application of brine from oil and gas wells on roads.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

Senate Local Government (4:00 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 281](#) (Senator Kristina Roegner): To authorize a board of county commissioners, and its own behalf, to award a franchise for the operation of a public transit system.
 - Second hearing, opponent testimony and interested party testimony

Wednesday, February 11

House Ways and Means (11:30 a.m.)

- [House Bill 420](#) (Representatives Gary Click and Bernard Willis): To disallow and, by 2030, eliminate property taxes levied for a continuing period of time.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony