



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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State capital budget introduced, Senate version passes out of chamber

This week, both chambers of the General Assembly introduced their versions of [the capital budget](#). [House Bill 959](#) and [Senate Bill 450](#) are identical. SB 450 has already advanced through the Senate, passing on Wednesday with a vote of 31-0.

CCAO's focus in advocacy efforts on the capital budget was a continuation of state funding for county jail projects. Unfortunately, the bills do not include any dedicated funds for jail projects (two small jail-related projects did receive community project funding).

One of the largest new items in this term's capital budget is \$346.5 million for mental health facilities, including a new facility in Montgomery County called the Miami Valley Behavioral Healthcare Hospital. While jail projects did not receive dedicated funding, this hospital may ease some cost pressures on county jails if it enables inmates to receive medical treatment there instead of in the jail.

As is tradition for the capital budget, it includes money for [local community projects](#). This term, community projects totaled \$208.3 million. A review identified 59 county projects that received funding. These 59 projects total \$13.9 million and are predominantly county fairground projects.

It is unlikely that the capital budget will undergo any changes. The General Assembly is expected to send one of the two bills to Governor DeWine next week.

Campaign to eliminate property taxes shifts focus to 2027

Ax Ohio Tax, the organization leading the effort to place a constitutional amendment to eliminate property taxes on the ballot, announced today that it was pivoting from trying to put it on the ballot this year to instead place it on next year's November ballot. The pivot is a tacit admission that the campaign has not gathered enough signatures.

Changing the aim to 2027 brings four new factors into play.

First, the signature thresholds will change. To be placed on the statewide ballot, the campaign must submit valid signatures from a number of voters equal to at least 10% of the most recent gubernatorial election statewide vote total and at least 5% of the most recent gubernatorial election vote in 44 out of Ohio's 88 counties.

Since there is a gubernatorial election this year, the number of signatures the campaign must submit for the 2027 ballot will change. This may make it easier or more difficult for the campaign to hit the valid signature target; most likely, it will be a mix.

Second, odd-year elections tend to have lower turnout than even-year elections. In the past 11 years, there have only been three statewide votes on odd-numbered years; none of these votes reached 50% turnout. Low turnout elections can be harder to predict.

Third, a key momentum builder for the campaign was the spikes in property tax bills due to valuation changes. Tax reforms such as House Bill 186 and House Bill 335, which limit unvoted increases on property tax bills to inflation, will begin taking effect and, if they function as intended, may decrease that momentum.

Finally, the campaign did not have any counterprogramming for the majority of its signature gathering efforts. Now, however, the Ohioans to Protect Public Services coalition (of which CCAO is a member) is raising awareness of the host of vital services that property taxes support and what may be lost if the proposed amendment reaches the ballot and passes.

[Ohioans to Protect Public Services \(OPPS\) issued a statement](#) regarding the news.

CCAO and OPPS will continue to provide education information to Ohioans.

Public records request bill reported, CCAO testifies on military absence bill, new Medicaid fraud substitute bill adopted

HB 314, Public Records Request Response Bill

This week, the House Judiciary Committee favorably reported [House Bill 314](#) (Representatives Dani Isaacsohn and Sharon Ray), a bill to assist local governments in dealing with voluminous public records requests.

The bill has three prongs: contracting authority for voluminous requests, a permissive alternate fee structure, and judicial authority to suspend requesters.

HB 314 did not receive any changes this week. For a more detailed overview of the bill, please refer to the [May 29 issue of Statehouse Report](#). The bill is expected to receive a floor vote next week.

SB 416, Elected Official Military Absences

[Senate Bill 416](#) (Senator Tom Patton) received its second hearing this week in the Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Public Safety committee. The bill allows elected officials who are an active or reserve member of the armed forces or the National Guard to retain their position when they are deployed. It also allows those officials to participate in meetings virtually.

CCAO Outreach and Member Engagement Manager Rachel Reedy provided [proponent testimony](#) in favor of the bill. She noted that, under R.C. 305.03, county offices are deemed vacant if the officeholder fails to perform the duties of the office (including appearing in person at the office location) for 30 consecutive days.

Since deployments typically last more than 30 days, without the bill's provisions active duty and reserve members of the armed forces could be forced out of their elected office when fulfilling their military duties.

She also highlighted that the bill permissively allows these officials to participate in meetings virtually, but that it is not a requirement to prevent the office being deemed vacant. This permissive authority is important since commissioners and county council members are currently not allowed to attend meetings virtually.

Parma City Council Member Kevin Kussmaul also provided proponent testimony.

HB 795, Medicaid Fraud

The House Medicaid Committee adopted [a new substitute bill](#) ([comparison document](#)) to [House Bill 795](#) (Representative Josh Williams) during its Wednesday hearing. The legislation is aimed at addressing fraud in the Medicaid program.

The new substitute bill still includes the elimination of Ohio's use of broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) for SNAP. CCAO continues to have conversations with legislators about our concerns with this provision and support removing or amending the bill to strengthen program integrity through other measures. The House Medicaid Committee is scheduled to meet on Monday, June 8th at 2:00 p.m. We anticipate another substitute bill will be offered either at that hearing or another hearing next week.

Eliminating BBCE would result in asset tests for SNAP eligibility determinations. This big shift in SNAP administration would greatly increase bureaucracy, require significant investments in both technology and front-line staff, and create more opportunities for errors driving up Ohio's payment error rate.

Additionally, it would revert the gross income limit for SNAP back to 130% of the federal poverty level from the current 200% FPL and prohibit the limit from being higher unless required by federal law. This is counter to the recent CCAO supported efforts taken by ODJFS to reduce the benefit cliff facing working families, which can sometimes cause families to decline more hours or increased earnings.

Members with questions should contact Rachel Reedy at reedy@ccao.org.

Legislative Activity

Floor Votes

Both chambers of the General Assembly held votes this week on bills that may be of interest to counties.

House of Representatives

- [Senate Bill 179](#) (Senator Terry Johnson): To verify the veteran status of imprisoned individuals and individuals facing imprisonment.
 - PASSED 93-0
- [Senate Bill 219](#) (Senator Al Landis): To make changes to the law governing oil and gas wells.
 - PASSED 63-30
- [Senate Bill 262](#) (Senator Bill Blessing): To require a public authority or other party to a construction contract to note variations from an industry standard form.
 - PASSED 93-0
- [House Bill 163](#) (Representatives Tristan Rader and Kellie Deeter): To require Ohio's SNAP program to begin using chip-enabled EBT cards, to name this act the Enhanced Cybersecurity for SNAP Act of 2026, and to make an appropriation.
 - PASSED 92-0

Senate

- [Senate Bill 331](#) (Senators Steve Wilson and Willis Blackshear): To allow certain public hospitality employees to accept gratuities.
 - PASSED 31-0

Committee Hearings

The following committees held hearings on bills or subjects of note to counties.

Select Committee on Data Centers

- [Monday](#)
 - Public testimony from a mix of 116 private individuals and interest groups.
- [Thursday](#)
 - Invited testimony from data center companies such as Meta, Google, Amazon, and Microsoft

House Children and Human Services

- [House Bill 939](#) (Representatives Andrea White and Mike Odioso): To require county boards of developmental disabilities to provide early intervention services to eligible children.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

House General Government

- [House Bill 264](#) (Representatives Tex Fischer and Adam Mathews): To prohibit certain government publications concerning candidates or ballot issues during the 30 days before an election.

- Second hearing, proponent testimony from Medina County Commissioner Steve Hambley and Americans for Prosperity Ohio.
- **AMENDED** to create an exemption for school districts about levies or bond issues if the county auditor certifies the publication provides only factual information and is not for advocacy.

House Public Safety

- [House Bill 346](#) (Representatives Mathew Kishman and Josh Williams): To enact V.J.'s Law to require mandatory reporters of child abuse or neglect to report to both a peace officer and the public children services agency.
 - Third hearing, interested party testimony from the Public Children Services Association of Ohio and the Ohio Nurses Association.
 - **AMENDED** to limit the scope of the bill to health care providers rather than all mandatory reporters.
- [House Bill 830](#) (Representatives Jeff LaRe and Darnell Brewer): To establish the violent crime reduction grant program.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony and proponent testimony from the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, and five other crime-focused organizations.

House Development

- [House Bill 284](#) (Representatives Mark Hiner and Erika White): To require iron or steel that is produced in the United States be used on projects supported by state funds.
 - Fifth hearing, no testimony
 - **AMENDED** to, among other provisions, allow state agencies to waive the requirement and to limit the scope of the bill only to iron and steel products that are to be permanently incorporated in a project.
 - **FAVORABLY REPORTED**

House Local Government

- [House Bill 445](#) (Representatives Mike Dovilla and Brian Stewart): Regarding regional councils of government and metropolitan planning organizations.
 - Third hearing, proponent testimony from Congressman Max Miller, the Medina County Board of Commissioners, Hinckley Township (Medina County), the City of Chardon, and nine private individuals.
- [House Bill 695](#) (Representatives Adam Bird and Brian Stewart): To prohibit certain local elected officials from entering into nondisclosure agreements.
 - Third hearing, opponent testimony from Scioto County Commissioner Scottie Powell, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Business Roundtable, and the Data Center Coalition.

House Ways and Means

- [House Bill 504](#) (Representative Angie King): To authorize counties to temporarily exempt a portion of property's increased value from taxation following a reappraisal and to name this act the Calculated Adjustments for Property Surges Act.

- Sixth hearing, opponent testimony from 12 school district and school official associations and one private individual; interested party testimony from the County Auditors Association and a school district.
- **AMENDED** to delay the bill's effective date, to specify the bill doesn't affect fixed-sum levies, and to exempt first-time levies from being affected by the bill in the first year.
- [House Bill 778](#) (Representatives Kevin Miller and David Thomas): To exclude certain fire and emergency medical services levies from being reduced by a community reinvestment area or tax increment financing property tax exemption.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony from the Ohio EMS Chiefs Association, the City of Columbiana, Mifflin Township (Franklin County), and three fire districts.
- [House Bill 762](#) (Representatives Beth Lear and David Thomas): To exempt certain vending machine food purchases from sales and use tax.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony from the National Automatic Merchandising Association and seven vending machine companies.

Senate Judiciary

- [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.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony from the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, and the Newark Division of Police.

Introduction of Bills

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

- [Senate Bill 451](#) (Senator Theresa Gavarone): To make changes to the Election Law regarding voter registration, voter roll maintenance, and enforcement, and to name portions of this act the Interstate Voter Assistance Act.

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.

Monday, June 8

[Select Committee on Data Centers](#) (12:00 p.m.)

- Invited testimony from local governments and communities.
 - Licking County Commissioner and CCAO Board Member Tim Bubb will testify on behalf of CCAO.

House Children and Human Services (10:00 a.m.)

- [House Bill 635](#) (Representatives Phil Plummer and Tom Young): To enact the Child Protection Reform Act.
 - Fourth hearing, all testimony
 - **POSSIBLE SUBSTITUTE BILL**

Tuesday, June 9

House Public Safety (9:00 a.m.)

- [House Bill 346](#) (Representatives Mathew Kishman and Josh Williams): To enact V.J.'s Law to require mandatory reporters of child abuse or neglect to report to both a peace officer and the public children services agency.
 - Fourth hearing, all testimony
 - **POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS**
 - **POSSIBLE VOTE**
- [House Bill 830](#) (Representatives Jeff LaRe and Darnell Brewer): To establish the violent crime reduction grant program.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony

House Ways and Means (9:00 a.m.)

- [House Bill 762](#) (Representatives Beth Lear and David Thomas): To exempt certain vending machine food purchases from sales and use tax.
 - Third hearing, all testimony
 - **POSSIBLE VOTE**
- [House Bill 391](#) (Representatives Jack Daniels and Heidi Workman): To require tax rates to be expressed as a percentage of true value on tax bills and ballot language.
 - Fourth hearing, all testimony

House Finance (10:00 a.m.)

- [Senate Bill 315](#) (Senators Tim Schaffer and Hearcel Craig): To require Ohio's SNAP program to begin using chip-enabled EBT cards, to name this act the Enhanced Cybersecurity for SNAP Act, and to make an appropriation.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony and all testimony
- [Senate Bill 450](#) (Senator Jerry Cirino): To make capital appropriations for the biennium ending June 30, 2028, and to declare an emergency.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Public Safety (3:00 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 416](#) (Senator Tom Patton): Regarding school district board of education members deployed on active duty in the United States Armed Forces or Ohio National Guard
 - Third hearing, all testimony

Wednesday, June 10

[House Finance](#) (9:30 a.m.)

- [Senate Bill 315](#) (Senators Tim Schaffer and Hearcel Craig): To require Ohio's SNAP program to begin using chip-enabled EBT cards, to name this act the Enhanced Cybersecurity for SNAP Act, and to make an appropriation.
 - Second hearing, all testimony
 - **POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS**
 - **POSSIBLE VOTE**
- [Senate Bill 450](#) (Senator Jerry Cirino): To make capital appropriations for the biennium ending June 30, 2028, and to declare an emergency.
 - Second hearing