STATEHOUSE REPORT

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House Bill 479, budget cleanup bill, signed into law

This week, Governor DeWine signed House Bill 479 (Representative Jean Schimdt) into law. The bill became an omnibus budget cleanup bill late in the committee process. The June 12 issue of Statehouse Report goes into depth on the county-related provisions. This article will summarize the high points. The bill's provisions will take effect on September 23, 2026.

PTS Fund and Commission

The bill includes an appropriation of $40 million to the until-now dormant Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) Fund. The fund will be used to reimburse public safety officers for out-of-pocket costs of therapeutic or medical services for PTS injuries that are not accompanied by a physical injury. PTS injuries with an accompanying physical injury will still be covered through the normal Bureau of Workers' Compensation process.

There is currently no statutory authority for the state to require public safety employers to contribute to the fund; instead, it limits reimbursement payments to the appropriation in the fund.

In addition to the appropriation and programmatic outline, the bill also creates the PTS Fund Commission under the Department of Behavioral Health to oversee the program. Public safety employers are not represented on the Commission.

CCAO will continue conversations with the legislature and the DBH regarding employer involvement in the PTS Fund commission process.

One-Time Enhanced Homestead Exemption

The bill allocates the $1.2 billion in surplus state General Fund Revenue. $350 million of the surplus will be used to reimburse local governments for a one-time enhanced homestead exemption for existing homestead recipients.

Each of the certified homestead recipients across the state will receive an equal share of the $350 million off their first-half tax bill in 2027. Based on a recent estimate that there are about 710,000 homestead recipients, and equal share is about $493.

SNAP EBT Chip-card Funding

The bill appropriates $2.5 million to pay for new EBT chip-enable cards to be issued as cards are replaced or renewed. However, the legislation creating that program, Senate Bill 315, has not been signed yet.

Public Record Status of Economic Development Assistance Information

The bill amends language in R.C. 9.66 that took effect earlier this year that created a broad exemption from public records for any information pertaining to requests for economic development assistance.

The new language limits the "information" concerning economic development assistance requests that public officials are forbidden from sharing to "individualized compensation and payroll information."

As a reminder, since the bill does not take effect until September 23, 2026, counties and their counsel must operate under the current version of R.C. 9.66(D).

This is a considerable narrowing of the scope of the disclosure limitation. CCAO is having ongoing conversations with other organizations on how to interpret the new language.

Property Tax Administrative Changes

The bill clarifies how property tax reforms passed earlier in the General Assembly will be administered. The clarifications largely pertain to cross-county inside millage and 20-mill floor inflationary cap calculations and the interaction of the homestead exemption and the 20-mill floor. The changes may affect operations of county auditors' offices but are unlikely to have a significant effect on county revenues.

VETOED: Earmark Elimination and Creation

The bill included a provision that eliminated a $750,000 earmark in SFY 2027 for the Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia (a council of governments) and created a $1.3 million earmark to assist Marietta College in establishing curricula and training programs for high-demand professions in the healthcare field.

Governor DeWine vetoed this change, citing the disruption the elimination of the earmark may have on ongoing economic development projects.

Governor DeWine acts on passed bills

Thus far, Governor Mike DeWine acted on 15 of the bills that the General Assembly sent to him earlier in the month. He has signed 13 bills and vetoed two. One of the bills he signed, he issued one line-item veto.

Bills Signed

Of the 13 bills that Governor DeWine has signed, six have notable county connections. One of these, House Bill 479, is discussed in the prior article and another, the state capital budget (Senate Bill 450), was discussed in last week's Statehouse Report. The rest are summarized below.

Senate Bill 262, Variations from Standard Forms

SB 262 (Senator Bill Blessing) requires public construction contracts that use an industry standard form to clearly indicate any variations made from the standard form. If the variation is not clearly indicated, that portion of the contract is void and defaults back to the wording in the standard form.

SB 262 will take effect on September 17, 2026.

Senate Bill 273, Security for Major Political Party Gubernatorial Candidates

SB 273 (Senator Kyle Koehler), among other provisions, earmarks $2 million for the State Highway Patrol to reimburse, at the Governor's direction, local law enforcement for costs incurred in assisting the State Highway Patrol in providing security for major party gubernatorial candidates, vice-gubernatorial candidates, and their immediate family members.

The bill's provisions will take effect on September 23, 2026, but the appropriation is effective immediately.

House Bill 170, Carbon Sequestion Impact Fund

HB 170 (Representatives Monica Robb Blasdel and Bob Peterson) creates a first-in-the-nation local impact fee for carbon capture and sequestration. The fee is equal to $0.03 per metric ton. Revenue from the fee will flow to the state and then be distributed out to counties that host carbon capture and sequestration sites.

County commissioners will have control of the funds and can use them for broad purposes.

The Legislative Service Commission does not have an estimate of how much revenue this fee will generate.

The bill's provisions will take effect on September 23, 2026.

Senate Bill 219, RUMAs

Senate Bill 219 (Senator Al Landis), among other changes to laws governing the oil and gas industry, limits an exemption for vehicles from needing a heavy hauling permit to only vehicles operated in accordance within a RUMA's limits.

The bill's provisions will take effect on September 23, 2026.

Bills Vetoed

In addition to the line-item veto that Governor DeWine issued in HB 497, he also vetoed two full bills. One of these bills, House Bill 173 (Representative David Thomas) concerned behind-the-meter utility services, more commonly known as submetered utility services, and did not have a significant county nexus.

The other vetoed bill was House Bill 472 (Representative Jodi Salvo), which made changes to the law governing absentee voting, specifically by requiring electors to provide photo identification to vote by mail. The bill includes exceptions for uniformed service members, overseas absent voters, religious objectors, and those electors who have certain disabilities, a lack of mobility, are confined in jail (except for those incarcerated for a felony), or who have other material obstacles.

The Legislative Service Commission estimated that the new requirements would increase administrative costs on county boards of elections, but that most of the cost will be borne by the Secretary of State to establish secure methods through which electors can apply for absent ballots and provide photographic proof of identification ahead of time.

In his veto message, Governor DeWine stated that the bill would create additional hurdles to voting and would impose an unfunded mandate on the Secretary of State's office and on county boards of elections.

USDA releases FFY 2025 SNAP error rates; Ohio at 6.76%

This week, the US Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Administration released its official Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025 state-level SNAP payment error rates (press release; data table). Ohio lowered its error rate to 6.76%, down from 9.01% in FFY 2024.

Following federal law change last summer, states will be required to contribute a portion of SNAP benefit costs dependent on the state's error rate (see table below) beginning October 1, 2027 (FFY 2028). States with an error rate lower than 6% will not pay any benefit costs. As the table below shows, at our current error rate Ohio would be responsible for about $160 million in benefit costs.

Federal/State Split of SNAP Benefit Costs by Error Rate			
Error Rate	Federal Share of Benefit Costs	State Share of Benefit Costs	Estimated Annual Ohio Cost
Less than 6.0%	100%	0%	$0
6.0% to 7.9%	95%	5%	$160 million
8.0% to 9.9%	90%	10%	$320 million
Greater than 10%	85%	15%	$480 million

Ohio will be able to choose between FFY 2025's 6.76% error rate or the error rate for FFY 2026, which we are currently operating in, to determine the benefit cost share amount in late 2027. Our county JFS agencies are working diligently to drive our error rate down.

Ohio's 6.76% error rate was the lowest of the ten most populous states. Only nine states and one territory achieved an error rate below 6% in FFY 2025. These states have small populations, with Wisconsin's being the largest (about half of Ohio's size). If Wisconsin is excluded, Ohio's SNAP caseload is double the combined caseload of the other eight states combined.

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

Legislative Activity

Introduction of Bills

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

- Senate Bill 460 (Senator Al Cutrona): To exempt required fencing surrounding oil and gas well pads from property taxation.