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# THE STATEHOUSE REPORT

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## Next Generation 9-1-1 legislation high on CCAO lame duck priority list

With just over one month away until Election Day, thoughts are turning to the upcoming lame duck session of the 134<sup>th</sup> Ohio General Assembly. Lame duck sessions are traditionally a time of intense legislative activity as lawmakers wrap up their work prior to the close of the General Assembly by the end of the year.

One piece of legislation that CCAO plans to push heavily during lame duck is [House Bill 445](#). HB 445 would implement and fund Ohio's Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) system. Ohio's outdated 9-1-1 system remains heavily reliant on wireline systems and does not take advantage of technological advances. For increased public safety purposes, the system is badly in need of update and upgrade.

HB 445 would migrate Ohio's existing 9-1-1 system to an IP based system that supports digital communications. Benefits of the NG9-1-1 system include:

- Ability for 9-1-1 to accept and process text, images and video. This would benefit hearing impaired individuals and people in difficult environments such as domestic violence situations.
- Faster processing of calls, leading to quicker response times
- Improved audio quality
- Much greater ability for first responders to locate callers
- Easier transfer of calls between jurisdictions
- Significantly less likelihood a call will ever go unanswered

To fund the necessary technological upgrades for the NG9-1-1 system at the state and local Public Safety Answering Point level, a Universal Service Fee of 70 cents per month would be applied to all numbers/devices capable of accessing 9-1-1. Even with the additional 70 cent fee in place, Ohio's taxes and user fees would remain at or below many surrounding states.

HB 445 has received four hearings in the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee. The CCAO policy team encourages members to discuss HB 445 with your state representatives and senators and stress the importance of implementing the NG9-1-1 system across Ohio and its many benefits to public safety.

Any questions about HB 445 can be directed to CCAO Legislative Counsel [Kyle Petty](#).

## Secretary of State LaRose creates Public Integrity Division

Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose this week announced the creation of a Public Integrity Division as part of his office. The new division will consolidate campaign finance reporting, voting system certification, voter registration integrity, investigations of election law violations, data retention and transparency, and cybersecurity operations.

According the SOS office, the division "will investigate and pursue attempts to obstruct, intimidate, or interfere with any elector in registering or voting. We will provide cybersecurity and physical security best practices and track county compliance. We will enhance Ohio's data security by improving voter registration and list maintenance practices and assisting boards in the performance of post-election audits. We will continue ensuring campaign finance reports are timely filed and in compliance with Ohio's campaign finance laws. Additionally, on the business services side of our operation, we will investigate complaints involving Ohio notaries, assist Ohio businesses by helping them protect themselves against cybercrime or business identity theft, and investigate any other concerns regarding the incorporation of new businesses in Ohio. An additional goal of the division will be to recommend legislative or administrative changes to improve transparency and integrity in these areas of public policy."

According to LaRose's office, the new division will allow this work to be done more thoroughly and efficiently instead of this work across multiple existing divisions.

"This is a responsibility I take very seriously because this quite simply is about defending democracy," said LaRose. "Our elections are being scrutinized like never before, and any lack of absolute confidence in the accuracy and honesty of those elections weakens the very foundation of our democracy. It's the duty of my office to earn and maintain that trust."

By late 2022, the new Public Integrity Division will incorporate professional investigators to look into any alleged cases of voter fraud, suppression, campaign finance violations and more. The investigators are expected to be hired by the office later this year following the November 8 general election.

## Bill Introductions

[HB 729](#) (Stewart) - To require county veterans service commissions to include two members whose military service commenced on or after September 11, 2001, and to require one member of the commission to be appointed by the board of county commissioners.

[HB 726](#) (Patton) - To allow certain counties to authorize a property tax freeze for certain owner-occupied homes.

