



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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Elections bills see action in first week of the GA's return; Old testifies

Erie County Commissioner and CCAO Board Member Matt Old [testified](#) on behalf of CCAO as a proponent for [House Bill 458](#) in the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee. This was the bill's second hearing. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Thomas Hall, eliminates local special elections held in August with three exceptions:

- a political subdivision or school district that is in a state of fiscal emergency may place a levy on the ballot;
- local offices, questions, or issues may be placed on the ballot on the same day as an August special election held to nominate or elect a member of the U.S. House of Representatives;
- a political subdivision may hold a special election on August 2, 2022, to submit to the electors the question of whether to adopt a charter.

Commissioner Old informed the committee that the CCAO policy platform calls for curtailing August special elections. "August special elections consume staff time and resources from county boards of elections," he stated. "County boards of elections must train and recruit poll workers, print ballot materials, conduct early voting, prepare voting locations and fulfill all other requirements, all for August special elections which traditionally feature low voter engagement. These resources could be better utilized elsewhere," he added.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose also [testified](#) in support of the bill, as did [Terry Burton](#) of the Ohio Association of Election Officials. The boards of election of Butler, Clinton, and Hamilton counties also submitted proponent testimony.

Meanwhile, in the House Government Oversight Committee, [House Bill 294](#), sponsored by Rep. Bill Seitz and Rep. Sharon Ray, had its third hearing in which the committee adopted a substitute bill. In addition to changes related to voter registration, early voting, and absentee voting, the substitute bill included multiple provisions of interest to counties:

- Provisions identical to [House Bill 458](#), as discussed above;
- Provisions identical to [House Bill 487](#), relating to ballot printing;
- An appropriation of \$7.5 million in SFY 2023 for the acquisition of electronic pollbooks and ancillary equipment for boards of elections;
- Increases the share of a county's electorate required to sign a petition to propose an alternative form of county government (different from the charter form of government) from 3% to 10% of those who voted in the most recent gubernatorial election.

CCAO is supportive of [House Bill 458](#) and [House Bill 487](#) and has been advocating for the inclusion of funding for replacement electric pollbooks. The change to the alternative form of county government petition threshold brings it in line with the threshold needed to place a county charter issue on the ballot.

A comparative document for [House Bill 294](#) can be found [here](#).

For more information, please contact Kyle Petty, Managing Director of Policy, 614-220-7977, kpetty@ccao.org.

SB 260 to allow cooperative purchasing for construction services

CCAO submitted written proponent [testimony](#) for [Senate Bill 260](#) (Sen. George Lang) to the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee. The bill allows political subdivisions to use cooperative purchasing for construction services. Currently, ORC section 9.48 permits counties and other political subdivisions to participate in a contract for the purchase of equipment, material, supplies, or services as long as the original contract resulted from a publicly solicited bidding process or RFP.

In 2019, the Ohio Attorney General issued an [opinion](#) stating that the term “services” did not include construction services. The bill amends ORC section 9.48 to ensure that the law is clear on this point. CCAO supports the legislation in order to provide more flexibility with regard to purchasing options.

For more information, please contact Senior Policy Analyst Jon Honeck, 614-220-7982, [jhoney@ccao.org](mailto:jhoneck@ccao.org).

135th General Assembly leadership teams announced

This week the 135th General Assembly Republican and Democratic caucuses in both the House of Representatives and the Senate voted for their leadership teams. In the House, the Republican leadership team is:

- Speaker of the House: Rep. Derek Merrin (R-Monclova)
- Speaker Pro-Tempore: Rep. Phil Plummer (R-Dayton)
- Majority Floor Leader: Rep. Scott Wiggam (R-Wooster)
- Assistant Majority Floor Leader: Rep. Susan Manchester (R-Waynesfield)

- Majority Whip: Rep. Brian Baldrige (R-Winchester)
- Assistant Majority Whip: Rep. Brian Stewart (R-Ashville)

Prior to their careers in the General Assembly, Representatives Wiggam, Baldrige, and Stewart all served their communities as county commissioners. Reps. Baldrige and Stewart also served on the CCAO Board of Directors during their time as commissioners.

According to Gongwer, the House Democratic Caucus has not scheduled its leadership vote yet but no challengers to House Minority Leader Allison Russo (D-Upper Arlington) have emerged.

In the Senate, the Republican caucus leadership is largely unchanged from the current General Assembly:

- Senate President: Sen. Matt Huffman (R-Lima)
- President Pro-Tempore: Sen. Kirk Schuring (R-Canton)
- Majority Floor Leader: Sen. Rob McColley (R-Napoleon)
- Majority Whip: Sen. Theresa Gavarone (R-Bowling Green)

The leadership team for the Democratic caucus is:

- Minority Leader: Sen. Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood)
- Assistant Minority Leader: Sen. Hearcel Craig (D-Columbus)
- Minority Whip: Sen.-Elect Kent Smith (D-Euclid)
- Assistant Minority Whip: Sen. Paula Hicks-Hudson (D-Toledo)

Other legislative activity

The following bills of interest to the Association had action this week.

Bill	Bill Summary	Activity
House Bill 150	Creates the Rural Practice Incentive Program (public defender loan repayment for practicing in rural areas) and creates a task force to study the indigent defense system. CCAO will appoint one member of the task force.	Reported out of House Finance 25-0 and passed by the House of Representatives 76-0.
House Bill 283	Prohibit driving while using electronic communications devices.	Passed out of House Criminal Justice 12-0 and passed by the House of Representatives 77-14.
House Bill 405	Clarify the appointing authority for boards of county hospital trustees.	Had its 4 th hearing in Senate Local Government and Elections.

Bill	Bill Summary	Activity
House Bill 419	Makes failure to make a mandatory report of adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation a 4 th degree misdemeanor.	Passed out of House Criminal Justice 12-0 and passed by the House of Representatives 92-0.
House Bill 531	Allows certain entities to contract with county prosecutors to provide legal services, with approval from the board of commissioners in the county of the prosecutor chosen for the contract.	Had its 2 nd hearing in Senate Local Government and Elections; CCAO Outreach & Member Engagement Manager Rachel Reedy provided proponent testimony .
House Bill 567	Requires common pleas court docket to appear on the clerk of the court's website.	Had its 1 st hearing in Senate Judiciary.
Senate Bill 329	Authorize certain political subdivisions to designate residential areas exempt from taxation.	Had its 1 st hearing in Senate Finance.