



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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209 East State Street • Columbus, Ohio 43215-4309
Phone: 614-221-5627 • Fax: 614-221-6986 • www.ccao.org

December 16, 2022

135th General Assembly begins with surprise Speaker vote

On Tuesday, the 135th General Assembly officially began with swearings in and the formal election of chamber leadership. The leadership teams in the Senate are unchanged from the [informal caucus votes](#) that took place last year.

In the House, on the other hand, there was a surprise. The House Republican Caucus vote in November selected Representative Derek Merrin (R-Monclova) as the presumptive Speaker of the House. On Monday, however, Representative Jason Stephens (R-Kitts Hill) was nominated for speaker as well. Rep. Stephens, a former Lawrence County commissioner and auditor, received 54 votes for speaker while Rep. Merrin received 43. The threshold to win the speakership is 50 votes, meaning Rep. Stephens will be the Speaker of the House for the 135th General Assembly.

All the House's 32 Democrats voted for Rep. Stephens and were joined by 22 Republicans. You can view the individual vote totals in the [House Journal](#) on page six.

Other action done in the House was the election of the Democratic leadership team (unchanged from the informal vote in November), the election of Rep. Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton) as speak pro tempore, and the election of Brad Young as House clerk.

The rest of the House Republican Caucus leadership team, along with committee assignments, are expected to be announced next week.

Governor signs December bills

This week, Governor Mike DeWine signed 38 bills that passed out of the 134th General Assembly during its last month and vetoed two others. Many of these bills have provisions of interest to the Association.

One important bill that the governor signed this morning is [House Bill 45](#) (Rep. Thomas Hall and Rep. Bill Roemer), which includes several appropriations from state-level American Rescue Plan Act funds and other state funds. A key provision in the bill for CCAO is an appropriation of \$7.5 million for replacement electronic pollbooks and associated technologies for county boards of elections. Replacing outdated pollbooks has been a priority for CCAO and the Ohio Association of Election Officials and we are happy that collaboration between our organizations, the legislature, and the executive helped bring the appropriation into fruition. There are many other provisions of import to counties which you can read more about in the [December 16, 2022](#) issue of *Statehouse Report*.

The other bills that the governor signed this week that contain provisions of interest to the Association are discussed briefly below. Links to the issue of *Statehouse Report* that includes a more detailed analysis of the bill is included at the end of each discussion. If the bill was not discussed in the end-of-year issues of *Statehouse Report*, we recommend you follow the bill number link to access analyses completed by the Legislative Service Commission regarding the bill.

[Senate Bill 16](#) (Senator Tim Schaffer), among other provisions, modifies the firearm qualifications for county correctional officers, allowing them to carry firearms on duty provided certain circumstances are met. This provision will enable correctional officers to assist the county sheriff in prisoner transportation. This bill was previously discussed in the [December 2](#) issue of *Statehouse Report*.

[Senate Bill 33](#) (Senator Jay Hottinger and Andrew Brenner) modifies provisions of the community reinvestment areas law, in a manner similar to that proposed in [House Bill 123](#) (Representative Mark Fraizer and Representative Jon Cross).

[Senate Bill 63](#) (Senator Sandra O'Brien) allows a board of commissioners to authorize a county department of probation to accept payments by credit and debit cards. Commissioners already have authority to authorize other county officials to accept payments through this manner.

[Senate Bill 288](#) (Senator Nathan Manning) makes multiple changes to the criminal code. Among the provisions of the bill is an expansion of distracted driving penalties, increases credit eligibility to 15% reduction of a prison term for active participation or completion of constructive programs, and strengthens penalties for strangulation or suffocation. This bill was previously discussed in the [December 2](#) and [December 16](#) issues of *Statehouse Report*.

[House Bill 66](#) (Representative James Hoops) includes several provisions, but of special importance to counties are provisions modifying ballot language for alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health service (ADAMHS) board property tax levies when a county leaves a multi-county board. Currently, when those levies come back up for a renewal, they must be identified as a new levy even if the terms are identical; the law now requires them to be more accurately described as a renewal (when applicable). The bill also requires the Requires the Tax Commissioner's biennial report on state tax expenditures to include

information on property tax exemptions. This bill was previously discussed in the [December 16](#) issue of *Statehouse Report*.

[House Bill 150](#) (Representative Brett Hillyer and Representative David Leland) creates the Rural Practice Incentive Program, a student loan repayment program for public defenders and prosecutors practicing in rural areas, and it creates a task force to study the state's indigent defense system. CCAO will appoint one member of the task force.

[House Bill 405](#) (Representative Brian Stewart and Representative Mark Johnson) clarifies the appointing authority to county hospital boards of trustees by codifying a recent Ohio Supreme Court decision and allows county treasurers to deliver property tax bills electronically, if the taxpayer opts to receive them electronically. This bill was previously discussed in the [December 16](#) issue of *Statehouse Report*.

[House Bill 487](#) (Representative Tom Young) makes changes to the bidding process for ballot printing contracts, most notably by eliminating the requirement that vendors be located within the state. This bill was previously discussed in the [December 16](#) issue of *Statehouse Report*.

[House Bill 501](#) (Rep. Hall) is the township omnibus bill. Among the amendments it acquired during the end-of-term process is one that allows local governments (including counties) to zone small solar facilities that operate at an aggregate capacity of less than 50 megawatts. This bill was previously discussed in the [December 16](#) issue of *Statehouse Report*.

[House Bill 567](#) (Representative Brian Stewart and Representative Richard Brown) broadly requires the clerk of the court of common pleas in each county to make documents available electronically.

CCAO once again thanks Governor Mike DeWine, Speaker of the House of the 134th General Assembly Bob Cupp, President of the Senate of the 134th General Assembly Matt Huffman, and all the legislators of the 134th General Assembly for their collaboration throughout the legislative biennium to help build stronger counties for a stronger Ohio.

We look forward to continuing these strong relationships with Governor DeWine during his second term as governor and with the leadership teams and legislators of the 135th General Assembly.

CCAO seeks policy analyst

CCAO has posted a [job opening for a policy analyst role](#) with the CCAO policy team.

The position is an excellent opportunity for individuals interested in working in the public policy field. CCAO is a well-respected trade association in the field of local government.

Among the responsibilities the position will fulfill are working with the rest of the policy team and Association members to advance county issues, advocate for Association priorities with the legislative and executive branch, and prepare materials for legislative testimony.

The minimum qualifications for an ideal candidate are a bachelor's degree in the liberal arts, social sciences, or a related field; between two and three years of experience with either county government, the state legislature, or the state executive; a valid Ohio driver's license; and the ability to meet insurance requirements.

You can access the complete job posting through the link above or [here](#).

If interested, please submit a letter of interest, a resume, references and a writing sample to CCAO Boards' Liaison & Events Manager Robin Garrett at resumes@ccao.org by January 9.