STATEHOUSE REPORT

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Engagement with the executive branch during finalization of the Governor's Budget; comments on LGF restoration and the Rainy Day Fund

Engagement with the DeWine-Husted Administration is critical to the success of CCAO's executive budget requests. The policy team encourages members to contact the administration and stress the importance of CCAO's policy items, including additional funding for county jails, indigent defense reimbursement, and Local Government Fund restoration, in addition to other important county priorities. Budget discussions are ongoing within the administration, so now is a great time to engage as the next state budget bill takes shape.

One potential talking point regarding the restoration of the Local Government Fund revolves around the recent announcement by the state that the state Budget Stabilization Fund (more commonly known as the "Rainy Day fund") is at its largest in Ohio's history at $3.5 billion. Based on a recent simulation by CCAO, the effect of restoring the Local Government Fund to its former statutory level of 3.68% of state tax revenue would be about $510 million a year. The current size of the Rainy Day fund could support a restored LGF for seven years.

A more apt comparison regards the recent transfer into the Rainy Day fund to bring it to its highest level. The Office of Budget and Management transferred $727 million into the Rainy Day fund to bring it a total of $3.5 billion. If the state had fully restored the LGF, it would have still been able to deposit more than $210 million into the Rainy Day fund.

It is important to share with the Executive branch and your legislators this context when discussing the need for LGF restoration. The state can afford to restore the LGF and its partnership with local governments. Share how your county might utilize increased LGF funds and encourage your county's townships and municipalities to do the same. Increased revenue sharing with local governments is not wasteful; rather, it creates more robust and vibrant communities which in turn create a stronger and more prosperous Ohio.

Ballot vacancy bill reintroduced, clarification of joint purchasing authority bill introduced

Two bills introduced this week may be of note to counties.

The first, Senate Bill 22 (Senator Nathan Manning), is a reintroduction of Senate Bill 53 (Sen. Manning) from the 134th General Assembly. It provides an exception to the "Sore Loser" law that generally prohibits a candidate who was defeated in a primary contest (including as a write-in candidate) from appearing on the general election ballot as an independent candidate, a write-in candidate, or as a replacement to a ballot vacancy. The bill eliminates this provision with respect to local partisan elections and only as a replacement to a ballot vacancy.

When the Legislative Service Commission (LSC) analyzed the bill in the 134th General Assembly, it determined there would be no fiscal effect on county boards of elections.

The second bill is Senate Bill 23 (Senator George Lang). This bill makes explicit that "services," as defined in ORC 9.48, the joint purchasing authority section, includes construction services but not services within the scope of practice by an architect, landscape architect, professional engineer, or professional surveyor. While LSC has not yet produced a fiscal analysis of the bill, joint purchasing policies generally help governments acquire goods and services for cheaper than if the government sought to acquire goods and services alone.