



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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ADVOCACY OUTREACH NEEDED: Senate Budget Amendments

The deadline for senators to submit budget amendments for the Senate Substitute Bill of [House Bill 33](#), the main operating budget, is Wednesday, May 17. CCAO urges you to contact your Senate members and encourage them to sign on and support the amendments below by reaching out to the primary amendment sponsor. The primary amendment sponsor is listed next to each amendment.

It is very important that you contact your legislators **as soon as possible** to express your support for our amendments.

We need your help to ensure these amendments become part of the state budget. We would encourage you to contact your Senate member to express your support for the following amendments:

Indigent Defense Amendments

- Amendment SC 0510-1
 - Increases funding for indigent defense reimbursement by \$23.1 million in FY 2024 and \$18.9 million in FY 2025 to reach an estimated 100% reimbursement.
- Amendment SC 0511
 - Replaces the temporary cap on reimbursement rates with a rate of \$75 per hour for noncapital cases and \$140 per hour for capital cases.
- Amendment SC 0508
 - Creates a new appropriation line item in the Ohio Public Defender's budget to directly pay for indigent defense costs incurred in counties that contract with the state.
 - Provides additional funding to the newly created line item to allow the Ohio Public Defender to contract with some additional counties.
 - Specifies that counties that do not contract with the state to provide indigent defense services are reimbursed in the same manner they currently are.

Local Government Fund Amendment:

- Amendment SC 0399
 - Increases the percentage of state general revenue fund tax revenue that is allocated through the Local Government Fund from 1.70% to 2.50%.

- Increases the appropriation to the LGF by \$238 million in FY 2024 and \$250 million in FY 2025 to accommodate the percentage increase.

If you have questions on these amendments, please contact Managing Director of Policy Kyle Petty, 740-503-6088, kpetty@ccao.org. Legislators and legislative aides with questions should also contact Kyle.

In addition to the amendments above, please review the [CCAO Senate Budget Priority](#) document for other provisions that the Association is watching closely as the Senate conducts its review of the budget.

CCAO provides budget testimony to Senate committees

On Wednesday, CCAO provided testimony regarding [House Bill 33](#), the main operating budget, to three Senate committees; President and Glenn County Commissioner Glenn Miller presented in-person testimony to the Senate General Government Committee while Shelby County Commissioner and CCAO Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee Chair Tony Bornhorst supplied written testimony to the Senate Agriculture Committee and Defiance County Commissioner David Kern gave written testimony to the Senate Health Committee.

President Miller's [testimony](#) covered a wide range of topics in the budget that the Association is monitoring, with particular attention focused on indigent defense. HB 33 retained the level of indigent defense reimbursement funding suggested in Governor Mike DeWine's proposal, which the Ohio Public Defender believes will result in a reimbursement rate of about 90%. President Miller stressed the importance of increasing the funding by an additional \$41 million over the biennium to ensure counties receive full reimbursement. He also discussed amendments that CCAO is seeking to create a temporary reimbursement cap at \$75 an hour for noncapital cases and \$140 per hour for capital cases and to create a separate line item to directly fund indigent defense services in the counties that contract with the state.

In Commissioner Bornhorst's [written testimony](#) on agriculture and water quality issues within the budget, he highlighted many important items that will help counties increase economic activity and water quality such as the Brownfield Remediation Fund, Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Fund, and increased funding for H2Ohio. The testimony also highlighted the need to restore the executive levels of funding for Farmland Preservation Grants.

In his [written testimony](#) on the human services provisions in the budget, Commissioner Kern highlighted CCAO priorities including increased funding for children services, family and children first councils, adult protective services, public assistance administration, and child care. It also highlighted the need to restore funding cuts made in House Bill 33 in family and children services, mental health criminal justice services, and continuum of care funding to local ADAMH boards.

Roundup: CCAO on Capital Square

In addition to budget testimony, CCAO was active at other committee hearings as well, with President Miller and Tuscarawas County Commissioner and CCAO 1st Vice President Chris Abbuhl providing testimony on two House concurrent resolutions. Additionally, a bill that involved county commissioners was amended to remove the role of commissioners.

On Tuesday, President Miller provided [proponent testimony](#) for [House Concurrent Resolution 5](#), which supports the Ohio Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial (also referred to as America 250-Ohio). As the president of CCAO, President Miller is one of 26 members of the commission. During his testimony, he highlighted that “Ohio’s counties have been the site of, and have shaped the makers, of American history.” The committee then favorably reported the resolution.

Also on Tuesday, Commissioner Abbuhl [testified](#) as a proponent on [House Concurrent Resolution 6](#) (Representative Angela King and Representative Phil Plummer) the House Pensions Committee. HCR 6 urges Congress to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) in Social Security. The WEP is a modified benefit formula that reduces the Social Security benefit amount for some retired or disabled workers that have earned pensions from earnings not covered by Social Security. Commissioner Abbuhl’s testimony discussed the adverse impact the WEP has on many individuals who choose public service for a portion of their careers and the hindrance this poses to hiring practices for the public sector, including county governments.

Finally, in the House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee, [House Bill 69](#) (Representative Brian Stewart and Representative Bernard Willis) received an amendment that removed the county commissioners from the bill. Before the amendment, the bill required one appointment to county veterans service commissions be made by the board of county commissioners. The amendment removed that provision. CCAO had not taken a position on the bill.

General Assembly passes SJR 2, funding needed

On Wednesday, the House and the Senate passed Senate Joint Resolution 2, which proposes a constitutional amendment to change the election result threshold for future constitutional amendments to 60% of the votes cast. The resolution was amended on the House floor to state that the amendment shall be voted upon by Ohio electors on August 8, 2023.

There are legal questions regarding whether the concurrent resolution can provide for its own election date since August special elections are only authorized if there is an election for the US House of Representatives. On Friday afternoon, an organization formally filed a lawsuit with the Ohio Supreme Court seeking to block the August election. Senate President Matt Huffman believes the Court will uphold its validity.

CCAO does not have a position on the amendment or the legality of the amendment’s election date. The Association will be working with the General Assembly and the Administration to ensure that counties are not responsible for paying the costs of the August election, should it occur. Indications were made during floor debate in both chambers that an appropriation will be made to fund the election during the budget process.

Legislative Activity

Floor Sessions

The following bills that may be of interest to counties were acted upon by the noted chamber of the General Assembly:

Senate (May 10)

- [House Bill 33](#) (Senator Michele Reynolds and Senator Kristina Roegner): To lower the minimum age for an original appointment as a police officer from twenty-one to eighteen years of age.
 - PASSED 25-8

Committee Hearings

The Senate has been conducting budget hearings regarding HB 33, the main operating budget. The articles above highlight county-related testimony to the budget. Additionally, the following committees held hearings that included bills that may be of interest to counties:

Senate Financial Institutions & Technology

- [Senate Bill 50](#) (Senator Steve Wilson and Senator Kent Smith): To make changes to the law governing 9-1-1 service and to repeal program requirements for emergency-service-telecommunicator training.
 - Sixth hearing; no testimony
 - Substitute bill adopted, brings Next Generation 9-1-1 provisions in line with what is currently included in House Bill 33, the Main Operating Budget.
- [Senate Bill 94](#) (Senator Andrew Brenner and Senator Al Landis): Regards the Treasurer of State, recorded instruments, powers of attorney, judgment liens, mortgage subrogation, law enforcement towing laws, and state stock banks, and to make an appropriation.
 - First hearing; sponsor testimony

House Families & Aging

- [House Bill 7](#) (Representative Andrea White and Representative Latyna Humphrey): Enact the Strong Foundations Act
 - Third hearing; proponent testimony from Philanthropy Ohio, Care Economy Organizing Project, and a private citizen. Interested party testimony from Policy Matters Ohio, Hopewell Health Centers, Triple P America, the Schubert Center for Child Studies, and the Cuyahoga County Office of Early Childhood.

House Ways & Means

- [Senate Bill 43](#) (Senator Andrew Brenner): Modify homestead exemption for the surviving spouse of a disabled veteran
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony from the Delaware County Auditor and the Ohio Manufactured Homes Association

House State & Local Government

- [House Bill 85](#) (Representative Tom Patton): Expand methods by which land banks acquire delinquent property
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony from the Ohio Landbank Association, the Cuyahoga County Land Bank, and the Ohio Municipal League
- [House Bill 145](#) (Representative Thomas Hall and Representative Brian Lampton): To expand political subdivision joint purchasing authority to expressly include purchases for construction services.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

Introduction of Bills

The following bills that may be of interest to counties were introduced this week.

- [Senate Bill 119](#) (Senator Bill Reineke): to make changes to the laws governing the transfer and disposal of solid waste and construction and demolition debris, including increasing certain fees.

Upcoming Committee Hearings

The following committees are currently scheduled to meet and discuss bills that may be of interest to counties. Other committees will likely meet as well but as of press time for *Statehouse Report* they have not released agendas. Please note that these schedules are subject to change.

If you would like to offer testimony on any bill, please visit the committee page and contact the committee chair's office for instructions on how to submit testimony.

Tuesday, May 16

[House Civil Justice](#) (1:00 p.m.)

- [House Bill 64](#) (Representative Darrell Kick and Representative Rodney Creech): Modify eminent domain law.
 - Third hearing, no testimony
 - Possible substitute bill

[House Pensions](#) (1:00 p.m.)

- [House Concurrent Resolution 6](#) (Representative Angela King and Representative Phil Plummer): Urge Congress to repeal Windfall Elimination.
 - Third hearing, opponent and interested party testimony
 - Possible amendments
 - **POSSIBLE VOTE**

[House Ways and Means](#) (2:30 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 43](#) (Senator Andrew Brenner): Modify homestead exemption for the surviving spouse of a disabled veteran
 - Third hearing, all testimony

[House State and Local Government](#) (3:30 p.m.)

- [House Bill 101](#) (Representative Adam Bird and Representative Jean Schmidt): Modify the law regarding village dissolution
 - Fourth hearing, all testimony
 - Possible amendments
 - **POSSIBLE VOTE**