STATEHOUSE REPORT

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## Controlling Board approves additional funding for August election reimbursement

On Monday, the state Controlling Board approved a request from Secretary of State Frank LaRose to increase the appropriation used for reimbursing counties for the cost of the August 2023 special election by $2 million.

Since the election was held solely to vote on a statewide ballot issue, R.C. 3501.17(F) requires that the state pay the full cost for the election. After receiving the expense reports from each county board of elections, 39 counties spent more than they were initially allocated while 46 counties reported spending less than they were allocated (three counties reported spending their exact allocation).

The unused funds from the counties that spent less than their allocation are to be transferred back to the Secretary of State, but to expedite providing full reimbursement to the 39 counties that had to use their own funds to pay a portion of the election costs, the Secretary of State requested the appropriation increase approved Monday.

Counties that are to receive funds from the increased allocation should be receiving information from the Secretary of State's office soon regarding when the reimbursement will arrive.

## OPERS Board votes to recommend employer contribution increase

At its October 17th meeting, the Ohio Public Employee Retirement System (OPERS) Board of Trustees voted to support pursuing an employer contribution increase. The actions taken by the OPERS Board of Trustees are as follows:

- Granted authority for staff to pursue legislation to increase the statutory maximum employer contribution limit for state and local from 14% to 18%;

- Recommended increasing OPERS Law Enforcement statutory contribution rates to mirror the Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund (OP&F) police officer employer rate;

- Recommended establishing a plan for contribution rate increases, with actual increases determined by the Board of Trustees each year;

- Granted authority for staff to pursue legislation to authorize the OPERS Board of Trustees, once every 10 years, to increase the statutory maximum by up to 1% if the Actuarily Determined Employer Contribution (ADEC) is higher than the statutory maximum.

A presentation outlining the recommendations can be found here.

At this point in time, no legislation has been introduced to implement the above changes.

The current statutory maximum employer contribution for state and local was set at 14% in 1976. Employers have been paying at the statutory maximum (14%) since 2008. OPERS is not recommending a member contribution increase. Currently, the OPERS state and local member contribution rate is 10%.

The current OPERS Law Enforcement (LE) employer contribution rate is 18.1% while the current OP&F police officer employer contribution rate is 19.5%. The OPERS LE member contribution rate is 13% and the OP&F police office member contribution rate is 12.25%.

House Bill 296 (Representative Cindy Abrams and Representative Thomas Hall) would increase the OP&F police officer employer contribution rate to 24% by 2027. The bill is currently being heard in the House Pension Committee. The success of H.B. 296 would determine the increase OPERS seeks for its employer contribution rate to OPERS LE.

The State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) is also seeking a legislative change to its employer contribution rate by 0.5% per year from 14% to 18% over an eight-year period. No bill has been introduced to formally propose these changes.

CCAO invited OPERS staff to present at the November 16th CCAO General Government and Operations Committee meeting to discuss these recommendations. The CCAO Board of Directors will discuss the recommendations at its meeting on November 17th.

CCAO will continue to update our members on legislative developments on the above recommendations. If you have questions, please contact Rachel Reedy at rreedy@ccao.org or 513-543-3723.

## Legislative Activity

### Committee Hearings

Several bills of interest to counties received hearings this week across different committees.

### House Agriculture

- House Bill 193 (Representative Kevin Miller and Representative Brian Lampton): To establish procedures and requirements governing biosolid lagoons and biodigestion facilities, including granting county and township zoning authority over those lagoons and facilities, and to modify the CAUV eligibility requirements for certain land used to produce biofuels.
    - Second hearing, proponent testimony from members of the Bath Township (Greene County) Trustees, the Fairborn City Council, the Fairborn Deputy Mayor, and several private individuals.

### House State and Local Government

- House Bill 153 (Representative Brett Hillyer): To limit which abandoned land may be subject to certain expedited foreclosure proceedings.
    - Third hearing, opponent testimony from the Ohio Land Bank Association.

### House Government Oversight

- House Bill 257 (Representative Jim Hoops and Representative Thaddeus Claggett): To authorize certain public bodies to meet virtually, and to declare an emergency.
    - Third hearing, proponent testimony from the Ohio Library Council, the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel, and a private individual.
    - **AMENDED** to remove the Board of Directors of the Bureau of Workers Compensation from the scope of the bill and to require public bodies provide definitions of certain decisions that would allow them to meet without public access to the virtual feed.
- House Bill 272 (Representative Adam Mathews and Representative Justin Pizzulli): To allow a concealed handgun licensee to carry a deadly weapon or dangerous ordnance in a building or structure that is not a courthouse but in which a courtroom is located if court is not in session.
    - Third hearing, proponent testimony from the Buckeye Firearms Association and opponent testimony from the Ohio Judicial Conference and several private individuals.
    - **AMENDED** to clarify that the office of clerk must also not be open for the terms of the bill to apply.

## Introduction of Bills

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

- House Bill 314 (Representative Adam Bird and Representative Josh Williams): To remove the option for the juvenile court to transfer a proceeding against a juvenile to the county where the juvenile resides.

## Upcoming Committee Hearings

The following committees are currently scheduled to meet and discuss bills that may interest counties. Other committees will likely meet as well, but as of press time for the

*Statehouse Report,* they have not released agendas. Please note that these schedules are subject to change.

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

### Wednesday, November 8

House Civil Justice (11:00 a.m.)

- House Bill 305 (Representative Brian Stewart and Representative Richard Brown): To provide for the electronic filing of pleadings or documents in courts of common pleas except a probate or juvenile court, in municipal courts, and in county courts, to permit the clerk to disburse funds for the computerization of the clerk's office without the court's authorization, and to permit municipal and county courts to increase the maximum amount of their additional fees from ten dollars to twenty dollars to cover the computerization of the clerk's office.
    - First hearing, sponsor testimony