



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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House concurs on changes to HB 101, addressing CCAO budget clean-up items

This week the Ohio House concurred with changes made to [House Bill 101](#) (Representative Adam Bird and Representative Jean Schmidt) during the Senate process. While in the Senate, the bill became the vehicle for several budget clean-up items, including two sought by the Association.

CCAO previously submitted [proponent testimony](#) during the House and Senate committee process, regarding the bill's provisions pertaining to the process of village dissolution, born out of difficulties faced in a village dissolution in Clermont County. Clermont County commissioners [Bonnie Batchler](#) and CCAO 1st Vice President [David Painter](#) also provided proponent testimony. In the occurrence of a village dissolution, the bill creates a Transition Supervisory Board (TSB) which will oversee the process. The TSB will be made up of three county elected officials: a county commissioner, the county recorder, and the county auditor.

The TSB will be responsible for managing the transition of the dissolved village with responsibilities including:

- Resolving outstanding debt, liabilities, and obligations;
- Settling any legal claims against the dissolved village;
- Administer and collect taxes and special assessments levied by the dissolved village;
- Dispose of the dissolved village's real and personal property;
- Manage the dissolved village's utility services, then transfer them;
- Respond to requests for the dissolved village's public records and transfer custody of the records to the proper entity;
- Wind down the dissolved village's involvement in community improvement corporations, special improvement districts, and tax increment financing arrangements;
- Conduct all other necessary business to conclude the village's affairs.

Among the budget clean-up items was the inclusion of language that will raise the indigent defense reimbursement rate on capital cases to \$140 an hour. The language in the budget does not provide for an exception for capital cases in the reimbursement cap of \$75 an hour. The reimbursement rate for capital cases will now match that set by the Capital Case Attorney Fee Council.

The other priority clean-up item included in HB 101 relates to Next Generation 9-1-1. The budget bill created [R.C. 128.419](#), which exempted wireless service that is priced at less than \$5 a month from paying the new \$0.40 per month NG 9-1-1 access fee. Due to a drafting error, this language potentially could lead to the access fee not being collected on any wireless device.

The language in HB 101 fully removes [R.C. 128.419](#) and restores the original intent of applying the \$0.40 access fee on wireless devices.

House Bill 101 now goes to Governor DeWine for signing or veto. If the governor signs the bill, the language fixing the indigent defense reimbursement cap for capital cases will be effective immediately while the other provisions will become effective 90 days after the bill is signed.

Replacement levy elimination bill receives proponent testimony; Property Tax Review Committee holds first meeting

This week, [House Bill 344](#) (Representative Adam Mathews and Representative Thomas Hall) received its second hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee. The bill would make two changes to Ohio property tax law: it would eliminate the authority of local taxing authorities to enact replacement property tax levies and tightens restrictions on the ability of schools and local governments to file property valuation complaints on property they do not own.

A replacement property tax levy generally extends the term of an expiring levy for the same purpose, but it removes the effects of property tax reduction factors, sometimes resulting in an increase on property owners' tax bills. The removal of tax reduction factor effects is the primary difference between a replacement levy and a renewal levy.

During the budget process, language similar to HB 344 was included in the House-Passed version. After lobbying efforts from CCAO and levy-funded county agencies, the provision was removed. During its second hearing on Tuesday, the bill received proponent testimony from the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of Independent Businesses, and Americans for Prosperity, along with three other organizations.

In other property tax related news, the Joint Committee on Property Tax Review and Reform held its first meeting on Wednesday. The committee was created in the state operating budget and is tasked with reviewing Ohio's property tax system and producing a report on recommendations for reforms. The report must be submitted by December 31, 2024, at which point the committee will be dissolved.

The first hearing was mostly informational, featuring invited testimony from the Legislative Service Commission and the Department of Taxation on the history of and the current mechanics of Ohio's property tax system. Copies of material shared during the committee, including LSC and Tax's testimonies, an overview of tax reduction factors, a Board of Tax Appeals ruling, and an LSC Members' Brief regarding property tax triennial updates, can be found [here](#). A recording of the hearing is available on the [Ohio Channel](#).

CCAO will keep members informed of future hearings and, when applicable, potential opportunities for counties to provide written or in-person testimony to help the joint committee understand the county perspective on property tax issues.

Senate Housing Committee holds hearing in Cuyahoga County

The Senate Select Committee on Housing heard from 80 witnesses in a hearing Thursday in Cleveland. Several witnesses represented county government.

[Cheryl Stephens](#), Vice President of Cuyahoga County Council, spoke from her experience of leadership in a housing-based nonprofit and asked the state to set a goal to create 50,000 new units of affordable housing and 50,000 units of middle-class housing.

[Sara Parks Jackson](#), Director of Housing and Community Development for Cuyahoga County, described county efforts to support the needs of residents through the creation of the department in 2023 and its focus on veterans, seniors, people with disabilities, those reentering the community from incarceration, and youth aging out of foster care. Director Jackson asked the state to provide more support for four objectives:

- Gap financing funds for affordable housing developers, whether single-family, multifamily, infill, senior, or supportive housing.
- Down-payment assistance to provide a step-up for those who need it most.
- Fix-up and home repair funds to aid current homeowners, especially our seniors, to physically maintain their homes to allow for neighborhood stabilization.
- Supportive and transitional housing for those who require supportive services to live successful and productive lives.

[State Treasurer Robert Sprague](#) also submitted testimony describing the Ohio Homebuyer Plus Program that was created in the state budget bill.

Copies of testimony are available on the committee's [website](#). The committee has not yet scheduled its next meeting.

CCAO, Ohio EMA to host solar eclipse webinar on January 17

On Wednesday, January 17, CCAO will be hosting a webinar with the Ohio Emergency Management Agency regarding what counties should know and how they can prepare for the total solar eclipse that will occur later this year.

People [within a 124-mile-wide band](#) in the state of Ohio will experience a total solar eclipse on Monday, April 8, 2024. This extremely rare event is expected to draw large numbers of visitors to Ohio. Areas outside the band will experience a partial eclipse. Christen Swayer-Cunningham is the Planning Section Supervisor at the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, ODPS and has been with Ohio EMA for four years and prior to this role worked as an Exercise Coordinator in the Planning Training and Exercise Branch and a Disaster Services Consultant in the Disaster Recovery Branch.

You can [register here](#) for the webinar. If you are unable to register with the link above, please contact Nedra Benson, CCAO administrative professional, at nbenson@ccao.org or call 614-221-5627 and provide her with your email address.

Chloride Reduction Grant, facet of H2Ohio Rivers Initiative, accepting applications

Through the current operating budget, the state funded H2Ohio at unprecedented levels, allocating \$270 million over the biennium for the program. This funding will be distributed among four entities with the goal of reducing harmful algal blooms within the Western Lake Erie Basin. Funding flows through the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and the Lake Erie Commission.

A newly created program funded at \$46.6 million per fiscal year named the H2Ohio Rivers Initiative under the Department of Natural Resources will focus efforts of cleaning up polluted waterways, removing certain dams, and restoring rivers across the state. One facet of the program is the [Chloride Reduction Grant](#), created with the purpose of promoting chloride reduction in Ohio water resources.

The Chloride Reduction Grant program will provide reimbursement grants up to \$75,000 per individual unit of government. The grants will be used to support upgrades to road salt application equipment and storage facilities with the goal of making improvements to storage and providing tools to reduce over-application of deicing materials and subsequently protect and prevent chloride from impacting surface and ground water resources.

The grant portal will remain open through the close of business on January 31. The application can be downloaded [here](#).

If you have any questions regarding the H2Ohio or the Chloride Reduction Grant process, please contact Policy Analyst [James Kennedy](#).

Legislative Activity

Committee Hearings

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

House Ways and Means

- [House Bill 347](#) (Representative Don Jones): To presume certain trailers and vehicles are sold for agricultural purposes and thus exempt from sales and use tax when sold to established farmers.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony from the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation

Introduction of Bills

The following bill(s) that may be of interest to counties were introduced this week:

- [House Bill 375](#) (Representative Steve Demetriou and Representative Tom Patton): To make changes to the law relating to tax foreclosures and county land reutilization corporations.

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, January 16

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

- [House Bill 315](#) (Representative Thomas Hall and Representative Bill Seitz): To make various township law changes and to make an appropriation.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony and proponent testimony
- [House Bill 271](#) (Representative Adam Mathews and Representative Bob Peterson): To specify that state questions and issues appearing on ballots must be numbered consecutively based on the previous election.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony