



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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Former Summit County Council Member Sims appointed to House

Last week, the Ohio House of Representatives Democratic Party Caucus voted unanimously to appoint former Summit County Council Member Veronica Sims to fill the seat vacated when Tavia Galonski resigned to take the position of Summit County Clerk of Courts.

Sims was first elected to the Summit County Council in 2017 and served as both Vice President and President of the council during her tenure.

Sims' appointment to the House adds another CCAO Former to the General Assembly's ranks; there are now 15 Formers in the General Assembly, 11 in the House and four in the Senate.

- House of Representatives
 - Speaker of the House Jason Stephens, HD-93 (Lawrence County)
 - Representative Brian Stewart, HD-12 (Pickaway County)
 - Representative Dan Troy, HD-23 (Lake County)
 - Representative Bill Roemer, HD-31 (Summit County)
 - Representative Veronica Sims, HD-33 (Summit County)
 - Representative Rodney Creech, HD-40 (Preble County)
 - Representative Sharon Ray, HD-66 (Medina County)
 - Representative Marilyn John, HD-76 (Richland County)
 - Representative Scott Wiggam, HD-77 (Wayne County)
 - Representative Roy Klopfenstein, HD-82 (Paulding County)
 - Representative Bob Peterson, HD-91 (Fayette County)
- Senate
 - Senator Bob Hackett, SD-10 (Madison County)
 - Senator Shane Wilkin, SD-17 (Highland County)
 - Senator Jerry Cirino, SD-18 (Lake County)
 - Senator Al Landis, SD-31 (Tuscarawas County)

NEXT WEEK: CCAO to host webinar with H2Ohio Program leaders on Tuesday

On Tuesday, February 20, CCAO will be [hosting a webinar regarding the H2Ohio Program](#), which received unprecedented funding levels in the most recent state operating budget. This funding will be distributed among four entities with the goal of reducing harmful algal blooms within the Western Lake Erie Basin and other water quality projects across the state through the new Rivers Initiative. Funding flows through the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and the Lake Erie Commission. The Directors and their staff will be providing project updates along with funding opportunities throughout the current state fiscal year.

Speakers will include Director of Agriculture Brian Baldrige, a former Adams County Commissioner and CCAO Board of Directors member; OEPA Director Anne Vogel, one of the early architects of the H2Ohio Program; Lake Erie Commission Executive Director Joy Mulinex, who has worked on water quality issues pertaining to the Great Lakes for more than 25 years; and H2Ohio Wetlands Program Manager Eric Saas, who oversees the H2Ohio Program within the Department of Natural Resources.

You can register for the webinar [here](#). If you are unable to, please contact Nedra Benson, CCAO administrative professional, at nbenson@ccao.org or call 614-221-5627 and provide her with your email address. A recording of the webinar, along with copies of slides, will be posted on CCAO's [webinar archive](#) shortly after the event concludes.

List of CCAO member races, county ballot issues available

In a month, Ohioans will go to their polling places and vote on a number of primary elections and local issues. As a presidential election year, two commissioner seats are up for election in each statutory county, as well as the other county row officers.

There are 187 seats on the ballot this year:

1. One county executive seat (Summit County);
2. 13 county council seats; and
3. 173 county commissioner seats (one of these seats is an unexpired term in Henry County).

Of the 187 seats, 153 have the incumbent running for reelection and 33 have incumbents who are not seeking a new term. The remaining seat is currently held by an independent who has stated he will seek reelection but, as an independent, does not need to file until March 18.

This equates to an 82% rate at which incumbents are seeking another term.

With 187 seats up for reelection, there are 374 races on the ballot in March (two per seat). Of these, 127 races (or 34%) have no candidates filed. Additionally, 164 races (or 44%) feature only one candidate. This leaves 83 races (or 22%) that are contested.

As mentioned earlier, there are 33 sitting CCAO members who are not seeking reelection. The following members of the CEBCO, CORSA, and CCAO boards are not seeking a new term:

1. CEBCO President and Shelby County Commissioner Tony Bornhorst;
2. CORSA Board of Directors Member and Fayette County Commissioner Dan Dean;
3. CORSA Board of Directors Member and Knox County Commissioner Teresa Bemiller;
4. CCAO President and Tuscarawas County Commissioner Chris Abbuhl;
5. CCAO Board of Directors Member and Wayne County Commissioner Ron Amstutz;
6. CCAO Board of Directors Member and Muskingum County Commissioner Mollie Crooks; and
7. CCAO Board of Directors Member and Huron County Commissioner Terry Boose.

Additionally, there are 16 county-level ballot issues across the state next month. Fifteen of these are property tax levies and one is a sales tax levy. The property tax levies are predominantly human services related, as well as two EMS levies and a levy to support OSU Extension activities. The lone sales tax levy on the ballot is a renewal of Mahoning County's combined criminal justice levy.

The [full list of primary candidates is accessible here](#) and the [list of ballot issues here](#). Additionally, they are posted on [CCAO's Data Exchange](#).

House committee hears sponsor testimony on bill to require political Subdivisions to use E-Verify

This week, the House Commerce & Labor Committee held a first hearing on [House Bill 327](#) (Representative Scott Wiggam and Representative D.J. Swearingen) which would require boards of county commissioners to verify each new employee's work eligibility through the federal E-Verify program and keep a record of the verification for the duration of the employee's employment or three years, whichever is longer.

If a board of commissioners has been determined by a court to be in violation of the E-Verify language within this bill, a \$5,000 fine will be assessed to the county. In addition to the \$5,000 fine, the county will also lose the ability to participate in a state contract for one-year.

The language will also require boards of county commissioners desiring to enter into or renew a contract for a public improvement or services on or after the bill's effective date to include both of the following provisions in the contract:

- A provision that the contractor will use E-Verify to confirm the identity and legal working status of each employee hired during the term of the contract to perform

duties in Ohio and each individual assigned by the contractor to perform work on the contract in Ohio.

- A provision requiring the state agency or political subdivision to cancel the contract if, after awarding or renewing it, the contractor does not use E-Verify as required.

All Ohio Future Fund Applications Now Being Accepted

The Ohio Department of Development opened the application portal for the All Ohio Future Fund as of Friday, February 16.

The \$750 million fund was created in the state budget to support economic development and site preparation. Applications are competitive and will be accepted on a rolling basis until funding is depleted. Applicants are advised to review the Indication of Interest checklist, narrative form, and data form for guidance on submitting a site development proposal.

More information is available on the [program website](#).

Legislative Activity

Introduction of Bills

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

- [House Bill 406](#) (Representative Steve Demetriou): To prohibit certain state and local government actions respecting digital asset mining, to exempt certain digital currency transactions from state and local income taxes, to prohibit local charges on digital assets, to require the state retirement systems to evaluate certain digital asset investments, and to name this act the Ohio Blockchain Basics Act.

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, February 21

[Senate General Government](#) (3:00 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 137](#) (Senator Theresa Gavarone and Senator Bill DeMora): To generally prohibit the use of ranked choice voting and to withhold Local Government Fund distributions from a municipality or chartered county that uses ranked choice voting.
 - Third hearing, all testimony.