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# STATEHOUSE REPORT

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**September 6, 2024**

## **Issue Spotlight: Next Generation 9-1-1 Update**

At the CCAO Summer Symposium, our members received an update on NG 9-1-1 and the MARCS radio program from the staff at the state responsible for overseeing and implementing those programs. We want to provide a brief update on the [NG 9-1-1 program](#) and subsequent action items for our members who could not attend the symposium session. We will provide an update on the MARCS program the following week. Additionally, [we will host a webinar on these programs](#) on September 23 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

### **Action Items:**

- The revenue from the expanded NG 9-1-1 user fee contained in HB 33 is yielding less than half of what the Ohio General Assembly projected.
- The fee will likely need to be increased in the upcoming operating budget to allow counties to upgrade their equipment and sustain operations under a new NG 9-1-1 system.
- Language contained in HB 33 that automatically reduces the 9-1-1 user fee from \$0.40 to \$0.25 in October 2025 needs to be removed.
- It is important to begin talking to your legislators about the need for additional 9-1-1 revenue and the detrimental impact on your local public safety system if the revenue is not increased.

Following the enactment of HB 33, the Department of Administrative Services' Ohio 9-1-1 Program Office began overseeing a contract with NextGen Communications, Inc. (part of Comtech Telecommunication Corp.) to implement and maintain the NG 9-1-1 Core Services for the state. Ohio's NG 9-1-1 system will utilize the state's Emergency Services Internet Protocol Network (ESInet) to deliver services to any Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) that elects to join.

HB 33 provided nearly \$46 million in one-time funding to assist with the upgrade and migration to an NG 9-1-1 system. That funding will cover the state's one-time costs associated with upgrading the statewide NG 9-1-1 system and will allow some counties to upgrade their systems and come online as pilot counties in late 2024 and early 2025. HB 33 also expanded the statewide user fee, which generates operating funding for the NG 9-1-1 system, from \$0.25 monthly on landline and wireless services to \$0.40 monthly on wireless services, VOIP, and multi-line telephone systems. The bill includes a provision that sunsets the increased fee and reverts to the \$0.25 fee on October 1, 2025.

The revenue from the user fee expansion was expected to generate over \$100 million annually. With the expected increased revenue, the percentage of user fee revenue given to counties decreased from 97% to 72%. Most of the foregone revenue went to operate the statewide NG 9-1-1 system, which local entities would utilize once systems are upgraded.

The initial revenue from the user fee expansion has fallen well below the expected amount. At its current pace, the new user fee will generate approximately \$48 million annually. While this represents a revenue increase for counties, it is well below the expected revenue amount and insufficient to support local entities in upgrading to an NG 9-1-1 system.

The state is moving forward with the migration to an NG 9-1-1 system. So far, 67 of the 88 counties have submitted an election form to signify they are ready to join the state NG 9-1-1 system.

The state is currently in the "Build and Test Phase" of NG 9-1-1 implementation. This phase requires the system to operate for 120 days without encountering a "critical failure" by January 31, 2025. The pilot counties will be the first to become operational and will serve as test sites for the system. If all goes according to plan, the system will be available to other counties starting February 1, 2025. While this is an exciting time for the 9-1-1 community, we still have to work to ensure local systems are adequately funded.

If you have questions about this information, please get in touch with Managing Director of Policy Kyle Petty at [kpetty@ccao.org](mailto:kpetty@ccao.org) or 614-220-7977.

## **Juvenile Justice Working Group releases recommendations for reforms**

This week, Governor Mike DeWine and the [Ohio Juvenile Justice Working Group released its report on recommendations](#) for changes to Ohio's state and local juvenile justice system.

The report makes 26 recommendations, including some that are already in progress. The recommendations will likely play a role in the Executive Budget and the full operating budget process.

The full list of recommendations, including explanations of each, can be found in the full report. A few of the recommendations that have direct county implications are summarized below.

- **Recommendation 6:** Provide funding through the Department of Youth Services to assist county prosecutors in prosecuting felony offenses in DYS facilities.
- **Recommendation 8:** Allow juvenile judges to use discretion when sentencing youths adjudicated of gun specifications.
- **Recommendation 10:** Evaluate Ohio's statutes on bindovers, specifically evaluating whether the current mandatory bindover provisions should be eliminated.
- **Recommendation 13:** Require juvenile judges to commit youth with special needs (such as blindness, deafness, wheelchair confinement, and other similar physical disabilities) to alternative placement facilities.
- **Recommendation 19:** Have juvenile judges explore services designed to help youth and families such as OhioRISE and Prevention Services Plans and urge juvenile courts to partner with DYS to develop front-end family resources.
- **Recommendation 20:** Have state agencies lead in analyzing whether to implement the Stepping Up Initiative in the state's juvenile justice system.
- **Recommendation 23:** Implement a reentry continuum to improve linkage to local resources, such as OhioRISE.

If you have questions about the report, please contact the CCAO Policy Team at [policy@ccao.org](mailto:policy@ccao.org).

## SOS Directives issued for November general election

Secretary of State Frank LaRose has issued two directives to county boards of elections since last Friday.

First, [Directive 2024-21](#) was sent on August 31 and concerns absentee voter ballot provisions. The directive instructs boards to place signage at the ballot drop box informing individuals that only the voter may place their ballot in the drop box. Any individual delivering ballots for a family member or disabled voter must enter the office and complete an attestation form.

The Secretary of State provides the [attestation form](#) and a [sample ballot box sign](#). The county's exact sign may differ as long as it uses substantially similar language to the sample.

The directive also reminds boards to continue monitoring drop boxes, particularly for individuals dropping off more than one ballot. Suppose a board believes that an individual drops off more than one ballot (a practice called "ballot harvesting"). In that case, it should report the allegation to the [Election Integrity Unit](#) of the Secretary of State.

The second directive, [Directive 2024-22](#), is a routine directive regarding canvass and certification procedures for the upcoming general election. Some examples of information in the directive include a reminder that boards may begin processing absentee ballots on October 8 but are prohibited from tabulating these ballots before the close of polls, a reminder of the reporting schedules for each county, and the length of the post-election cure period for provisional ballots or deficient absentee ballots.

CCAO is in contact with the Ohio Association of Elections Officials to better understand the impact of these directives on county boards of elections. We would encourage members to reach out to their boards of elections to discuss local implementation of the directives.

## **Legislative Activity**

### **Introduction of Bills**

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

- [Senate Bill 312](#) (Senator Niraj Antani): To legalize and regulate internet casino gaming in this state, to modify the law governing online sports gaming, and to levy a tax on businesses that provide internet casino gaming