



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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County budget commission reform bill introduced in House

A bill to make changes to the scope of duties of county budget commissions received its first hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee this week.

[House Bill 309](#) (Representative David Thomas) primarily focuses on the county budget commission but also makes small changes to alternate distribution formulas for the Local Government Fund and Public Library Fund. The bill does not make any modifications to the membership composition of the county budget commission. There is currently a provision in House Bill 96, the state operating budget, that would replace the county prosecutor with the president of the board of county commissioners.

Under HB 309, each taxing unit that receives revenue from inside millage or the 20-mill floor (applicable only to school districts) must state in its tax budget if it will accept any unvoted increase in anticipated revenue. If the taxing unit opts to forgo the increased revenue, the CBC is required to reduce levy rates accordingly.

The bill makes the following other changes to the scope and authority of CBCs:

- Limits the requirement that voted levies be approved without modification to apply only to the levy's first year of collection (unless the levy is a renewal or if the taxing unit requests a lower amount).
- Limits the general applicability of a requested rate reduction, both for voted levies and inside millage, to the succeeding fiscal year unless the taxing unit specifically requests it apply to additional years.
- Requires the CBC to hold a hearing for any levy if the fund the levy supports is estimated to have an unencumbered balance of more than 30%. At the hearing, the taxing authority may present its position regarding if the levy should be reduced or not and may provide evidence to support its position.

- If the CBC decides to reduce the levy after the hearing, the reduction cannot be greater than the amount by which the fund is expected to greater than a 30% unencumbered balance.

Other notable changes to the CBC in the bill allow the CBC to meet virtually and adopt a policy governing the use of virtual meeting technology, places the burden of proof for appeals of CBC decisions on the taxing unit, and requires boards of county commissioners seek a recommendation from the CBC on if a tax levy should be submitted to the electorate. This last provision is not a veto by the CBC, but rather simply acquiring an opinion.

Finally, the bill removes the "large city veto" in determining if a County Undivided Local Government Fund will be distributed using an alternative method. Under current law, a proposed alternative distribution method must receive approval from the following:

- The board of county commissioners;
- The legislative authority of the city with the greatest population in the county;
- A majority of the boards of township trustees; and
- A majority of the legislative authorities of municipal corporations.

The bill removes the second item on the list.

CCAO does not currently have a position on HB 309. If you have questions regarding the bill, please contact Research Analyst Nick Ciolli at nciolli@ccao.org.

County leaders provide testimony to final Senate hearings before introduction of Senate budget draft

This week, the Senate Finance Committee held hearings on House Bill 96, the state operating budget, ahead of the chamber's release of its version of the budget next Tuesday. Several county commissioners and county organizations took the opportunity this week to share their perspectives on budget issues with the committee.

[Clermont County Commissioner and CCAO President David Painter](#) provided proponent testimony to urge the Senate to continue the foundation the House built regarding CCAO's priority areas. He also requested the Senate's support for amendments that would increase funding for indigent defense reimbursement, increase the Next Generation 9-1-1 fee to \$1.25 per month, remove the provision allowing counties to eliminate their Family and Children First Councils, and increase the threshold for publicly funded child care eligibility to 160% of the federal poverty level.

[Ross County Commissioner and CCAO Board of Directors Member Jack Everson](#) joined a panel with Angela Sausser, the Executive Director of the [Public Children Services Association of Ohio](#), and Jeremy Ratcliff, the [Highland County Job and Family Services Director](#). This panel asked the committee to maintain increased funding for counties for the State Child Protection allocation and regional child wellness campuses. The panel also recommended the Senate maintain the language that will increase transparency and predictability

regarding costs for placement and care of children eligible for foster care maintenance payments.

[Lucas County Commissioner Lisa Sobecki](#) submitted written testimony requesting the inclusion of \$20 million for an H2Ohio program to Ash Tree Removal Grant Program and \$15 million for Local Government Cybersecurity Grants. Commissioner Sobecki also urged the continuance of House language and funding levels for the 1115 Medicaid waiver, indigent defense reimbursement, brownfield funding and the Local Government Fund, while returning to the introduced language regarding jail construction grants.

The following organizations representing other elected county officers also testified:

- The [Ohio State Coroners Association](#) requested the removal of language that would make the county coroner an appointed position.
- The [Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association](#) requested the county prosecutor remain a member of the county budget commission or a provision to allow the prosecutor to opt out. The OPAA also asked the Senate to remove language allowing the Attorney General to appoint special counsel at Department of Rehabilitation and Correction facilities. The association also requested that, if the Ohio Elections Commission is abolished, another state entity picks up the responsibilities, not the county boards of election. OPAA asked that increased penalties for illegal conveyance into detention facilities apply to local employees as well as state employees.
- The [County Auditors' Association of Ohio](#) requested several property tax reforms including an expanded homestead exemption, the elimination of the non-business credit, an expansion of the owner occupancy credit, limiting revenue growth schools can receive because of reappraisals, and creating options for targeted relief for low-income residents.
- The [Clerk of Courts Association](#) requested the Senate retain House language to allow clerks to directly apply for grants and to increase title fees by \$5 so the clerks would retain \$16.50 instead of \$11.50.
- The [County Engineers Association](#) testified in support of \$20 million for the Ash Tree Removal Grant Program through H2Ohio and [against the removal](#) of the requirement that county engineers have a surveyor license in addition to an engineering license.
 - There is no provision currently in the budget that removes the dual licensure requirement.

The Senate Finance Committee will meet Tuesday to adopt its substitute budget bill and then hear more public testimony throughout the week. The committee is expected to adopt an omnibus amendment the following week, report the bill, and the full Senate pass it. The House and Senate would then have two weeks to make a final version of the budget and send it to Governor DeWine. The budget must be signed by 11:59 p.m. on June 30.

Solid Waste Management District withdraw bill advances out of committee

On Tuesday, the House Community Revitalization Committee unanimously advanced [Senate Bill 147](#) (Senator Bill Reineke), which makes several changes to the laws governing solid waste and solid waste management districts (SWMD) in Ohio.

Joint SWMD withdrawal process

SB 147 allows a county in any joint SWMD to withdraw from the district at any time. The counties that comprise the joint SWMD would enter into an MOU to provide continuity of operations during a two year “divorce” period. During that time, the two or more new SWMDs would create new solid waste management plans for approval by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA). The counties have forty-five days to enter into an MOU prior to the start of the separation period.

The bill received several amendments during the committee process. The Senate added language to ensure the division of district assets occurs during the two-year separation period, rather than the forty-five-day MOU process. The House added language to clarify that current joint SWMD funds could be used to fund the solid waste management planning process for the two or more forming districts, if negotiated in the MOU.

The committee also amended the bill to create a withdrawal process for a joint SWMD that is managed by a regional solid waste management authority. Belmont and Jefferson counties are the only counties currently in a joint solid waste management authority. If the agreement that governs the authority includes a mechanism for withdrawal, that authority would follow that procedure. If the agreement does not, the board of county commissioners of the county proposing to withdraw has to obtain approval from municipalities and townships in the district. The approval must be from at least 60% of the total population of the district and include the largest municipality in each county.

Permissive C&DD disposal tiered fee

The House committee also made several changes to the permissive tiered fee on the disposal of construction and demolition debris (C&DD). The C&DD disposal fee would be implemented and capped in the same manner as solid waste disposal fees with a range of \$1 to \$2 for in-district and out of state disposal, and a range of \$2 to \$4 for out-of-district but in-state disposal.

In the introduced version of SB 147, all SWMDs would be able to levy this permissive C&DD fee. **The House committee amended the bill to allow a SWMD to levy the fee only in authorized counties.** An authorized county is defined as a population between 53,000 and 58,000 according to the most recent decennial census. Seneca County is currently the only county that fits this parameter.

The introduced bill required all revenue from this fee to be given to the local health district that oversees the facility that collected the fees. The House committee amended the distribution of the fee to be:

- 25% to the OEPA
 - Half deposited in the Environmental Protection Fund and half deposited in the Waste Management Fund
- 75% to the SWMD, which can be used either:
 - For a local health district that oversees the facility that collected the fees or for SWMD purposes

Solid waste disposal fees allowable uses

Finally, SB 147 adds a new permissible use for solid waste disposal fees in all SWMDs across the state. A SWMD can choose to provide financial assistance to individual counties, boards of health, municipalities, and townships to mitigate the impact of solid waste facilities on public health, safety, and welfare.

CCAO submitted [interested party testimony](#) on the bill last week. SB 147 now heads to the full House for consideration. If you have questions about the bill, please contact Rachel Reedy at rreedy@ccao.org.

Legislative Activity

Committee Hearings

The following committees held hearings this week regarding bills that may interest counties.

House Finance

- [House Bill 2](#) (Representative Mark Johnson): To establish the Child Care Cred Program and to make an appropriation.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony
- [House Bill 298](#) (Representatives Brian Stewart and Marilyn John): To legalize and regulate internet gambling in this state, to levy a tax on businesses that provide internet gambling, and to prohibit online sweepstakes games
 - First hearing, proponent testimony from five gambling providers and interested party testimony from the NFIB, Boyd Gaming, and the iDevelopment and Economic Association.

Senate General Government

- [Senate Bill 153](#) (Senators Theresa Gavarone and Andy Brenner): To require verification of an elector's citizenship before the elector may vote and to modify procedures regarding voter registration, voter roll maintenance, absent voting, and election petitions
 - Third hearing, opponent testimony and interested party testimony from numerous organizations and individuals.
- [Senate Bill 82](#) (Senators Bill DeMora and Theresa Gavarone): To specify that certain election officials are designated public service workers for purposes of the public records law.
 - Third hearing, proponent testimony from the Wayne County Board of Elections.

- [Senate Bill 4](#) (Senator Theresa Gavarone): To establish the Election Integrity Unit in the Office of the Secretary of State and to modify the law governing the prosecution of election law violations.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony from the Secretary of State.

House Agriculture

- [House Bill 163](#) (Representatives Tristan Rader and Kellie Deeter): To require Ohio's SNAP program to begin using chip-enabled EBT cards, to name this act the Enhanced Cybersecurity for SNAP Act of 2025, and to make an appropriation.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony from the Council of Retail Merchants, the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, Hunger Network in Ohio, and the Ohio Poverty Law Center, and interested party testimony from the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors Association.

House Development

- [House Bill 147](#) (Representative Brian Lorenz): To exempt from sales and use tax building materials sold to a contractor under a contract valued at \$25 million or more for projects in areas with a port authority.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

House Local Government

- [House Bill 124](#) (Representatives David Thomas and Thomas Hall): To modify the process for making property tax sales-assessment ratio studies.
 - Fourth hearing, interested party testimony from the Association of School Business Officials, the Buckeye Association of School Administrators, and the School Boards Association.
 - **AMENDED** to make timing changes regarding various provisions
 - **FAVORABLY REPORTED**
- [House Bill 274](#) (Representatives David Thomas and Thomas Hall): To require townships and municipal corporations to provide firefighting services and emergency medical services and to establish the Fire and EMS Shared Services Reimbursement Grant Program
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

House Public Safety

- [House Bill 217](#) (Representatives Christine Cockley and Kevin Ritter): To enact the Finding and Identifying with NamUs Data (FIND) Act to require law enforcement agencies to enter information relating to a report of a missing person in the national missing and unidentified persons system (NamUs).
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

House Ways and Means

- [House Bill 232](#) (Representatives Adam Mathews and David Thomas): To modify the law governing certain property tax complaints.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony from the Ohio Taxpayer Protection Coalition and Ohio REALTORS

- [House Bill 179](#) (Representative Jason Stephens): To create a statewide screening system for certain property tax reductions and to make an appropriation.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

Senate Health

- [Senate Bill 161](#) (Senators Tim Schaffer and Terry Johnson): To require the Director of Job and Family Services to seek permission to exclude certain items from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

Senate Local Government

- [Senate Bill 118](#) (Senator George Lang): Regarding limitations on recovery and lien imposition by municipalities against property owners of non-owner-occupied properties for unpaid water, sewer, and disposal services rates and charges.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony
- [Senate Bill 104](#) (Senator Andrew Brenner): To limit the authority of local governments to regulate short-term rental properties, to extend local lodging taxes to short-term rentals, to require collection of those taxes by short-term rental platforms, and to require real estate licenses to be issued electronically.
 - Fourth hearing, proponent and opponent testimony from numerous organizations and individuals.
 - **AMENDED** to make a number of changes, including placing a 7.5% cap on combined lodging taxes on short-term rental properties, grandfathering existing tax regulations, and requires short-term rental platforms to collect and remit local lodging taxes to the Department of Taxation, among others.

Senate Select Committee on Gaming

- [Senate Bill 197](#) (Senator Nate Manning): To legalize internet gambling and levy a tax on businesses that provide internet gambling, to permit internet lottery gaming and online wagering on horse racing, to make other changes to the Gambling Law, and to make an appropriation.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony from three gambling providers and interested party testimony from Boyd Gaming, the iDevelopment and Economic Association, and two other entities.

Introduction of Bills

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

- [House Bill 307](#) (Representatives Dontavious Jarrells and Monica Robb Blasdel): To establish a program regarding lead service line replacement and to name this act the Lead Line Replacement Act.
- [House Bill 313](#) (Representatives Adam Mathews and Dani Isaacsohn): To create a grant program for townships and municipalities that adopt pro-housing policies and to make an appropriation.

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, June 3

House Public Safety (9:30 a.m.)

- [House Bill 20](#) (Representatives Thomas Hall and Phil Plummer): To prohibit a person from knowingly harassing or impeding an emergency service responder who is engaged in the lawful performance of a legal duty and to clarify that heightened penalties apply for menacing a probation officer.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony
 - **POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS**
- [House Bill 23](#) (Representatives Bill Roemer and Josh Williams): To create the escaped convict alert program.
 - Third hearing, opponent and interested party testimony
- [House Bill 247](#) (Representative Kevin Miller): To make changes to the law governing dogs, including dangerous and vicious dogs.
 - Second hearing, proponent and opponent testimony
 - **POSSIBLE SUBSTITUTE BILL**

House Technology and Innovation (10:00 a.m.)

- [House Bill 283](#) (Representatives Adam Mathews and Haraz Ghanbari): To require political subdivisions to adopt a cybersecurity program.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

House Finance (10:30 a.m.)

- [House Bill 41](#) (Representatives Andrea White and Bill Roemer): To establish certain child care grant programs, including those related to child care capacity and learning labs, and to make an appropriation.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony
- [House Bill 298](#) (Representatives Brian Stewart and Marilyn John): To legalize and regulate internet gambling in this state, to levy a tax on businesses that provide internet gambling, and to prohibit online sweepstakes games
 - Second hearing, all testimony

House Children and Human Services (2:15 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 138](#) (Senator Terry Johnson): To modify various laws regarding boards of alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services and to impose penalties for not registering recovery housing residences.
 - Second hearing, proponent and interested party testimony

Senate Finance (2:30 p.m.)

- [House Bill 96](#): State Operating Budget

- **SUBSTITUTE BILL**

Senate Financial Institutions, Insurance and Technology (4:00 p.m.)

- **Senate Bill 203** (Senator Tim Schaffer): To require political subdivisions to adopt a cybersecurity program.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

House General Government (4:15 p.m.)

- **House Bill 197** (Representatives Dan Troy and Beryl Piccolantonio): To require a presidential primary election to be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony
- **Senate Bill 63** (Senators Theresa Gavarone and 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.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony
- **House Bill 248** (Representative David Thomas): To make various changes regarding the Auditor of State.
 - Third hearing, opponent and interested party testimony

Wednesday, June 4

Senate Finance (9:00 a.m.)

- **House Bill 96**: State Operating Budget
 - Public testimony

House Development (9:45 a.m.)

- **Senate Bill 6** (Senator Kristen Roegner): To make changes to the law relating to building inspections
 - Fourth hearing, all testimony
 - **POSSIBLE VOTE**
- **House Bill 284** (Representatives Mark Hiner and Erika White): To require iron or steel that is produced in the United States be used on projects supported by state funds.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

Thursday, June 5

Senate Finance (9:00 a.m.)

- **House Bill 96**: State Operating Budget
 - Public testimony

Friday, June 6

Senate Finance (9:00 a.m.)

- **House Bill 96**: State Operating Budget
 - Public testimony