



# STATEHOUSE REPORT

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## Budget bill may be history but the successes live on



Increasing reimbursement for indigent defense and securing funding for the acquisition of electronic poll book systems were two of the state budget bill provisions that are directly assisting counties on a daily basis.

Through the first three months of this fiscal year county filings for indigent defense reimbursement totaled approximately \$30.4 million and are running about \$1.4 million below the projections. Unfortunately, revenue

deposited into the Indigent Defense Support Fund, which also contributes to the amount of funding available for reimbursement, is coming in under projections, too. The State Public Defender's office is currently reimbursing at 50% for capital cases and 48% for all other cases, and if the current trends continue we should see, again, depending on system demand, reimbursement in the 50% range which is an appreciable increase from the 40% reimbursement rate received over the last several years.

The acquisition of electronic poll books is also continuing. The cooperative efforts of the Department of Administrative Services, the Office of the Secretary of State, the Ohio Association of Elections Officials and the CCAO has led to a practical process for counties to test, select and acquire the electronic poll books through the state cooperative purchasing system and receive the state reimbursement for both newly and previously acquired systems. There are several counties that are either running a demonstration pilot or fully utilizing electronic poll books for next week's election. Also begin the process for setting counties up for success in the state capital budget which will be considered next year by asking your legislators to support including a similar approach to help counties acquire new voting equipment in the state capital budget.



Whenever you see your legislators please remember to remind them of these budget items, express your appreciation for their support for these funding programs, and share with them how these provisions are directly impacting and benefiting your county every day.

## Lake Erie Caucus hears Clean Water Bond Issue Proposals

Members of the Lake Erie Caucus gave a warm reception Tuesday to proposed ballot issues that could result in the issuance of bonds to fund sewer and water quality needs. Up for discussion were two proposals: a \$100 million a year bond proposal from Senate Minority Leader [Joe Schiavoni \(D-Boardman\)](#) and a more comprehensive water quality plan from the Healthy Water Ohio coalition.



Sen. Joe Schiavoni

Sen. Schiavoni's proposal ([SJR 3](#)) would generate funds to support the preservation and expansion of sewer and water systems - an idea caucus co-chair Sen. Randy Gardner (R-Bowling Green) applauded. "If this process is inclusive, it's bipartisan, we have executive and legislative leadership...I believe this is something that would have substantial statewide support," Sen. Gardner said.

At the time the proposal was introduced, Senate leadership expressed concern about such a program potentially pushing the state beyond its constitutionally mandated 5% debt cap. But Sen. Schiavoni said projections from the Office of Budget and Management show the measure is expected to increase in the debt limit from 3.2% to 3.4%, well below that mandated cap. "If Ohio voters approve the resolution, the General Assembly would be able to authorize up to \$100 million each fiscal year over a 10-year period for sewer and water capital improvements, for a total investment of \$1 billion," Sen. Schiavoni said. "Not only is there tremendous demand for these grants, it is important to note the requested amount is fiscally responsible."

Sen. Gardner said he was pleased to hear the proposal's impact on the debt cap would be minimal. "Sometimes when this is discussed, people seem to think a \$1 billion bond issue is a lot of money," Sen. Gardner said. "I'm not going to dismiss the fact it's a significant investment, but when you compare it to the tens of thousands of jobs, the billions of dollars of economic activity, the hundreds of small businesses directly affected by the health of the lake...we know this amount of money is relatively small versus the challenge and the economic importance - not to mention the environmental importance - of the challenge before us."

The resolution is currently assigned to the Senate Finance committee where it has not yet been heard. But Sen. Schiavoni pointed to the 11 lawmakers who have co-sponsored the measure as a signal of the resolution's bipartisan support. Two of those 11 senators - Sen. Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) and Sen. John Eklund (R-Chardon) - are Republicans.

Sen. Schiavoni on Tuesday said he's eyeing a March vote, but in responding to questions from the caucus he indicated he's willing to be flexible on the timeline. "I feel like time is of an essence," Sen. Schiavoni said. "You can start to think about this politically and what would be more likely with voter turnout and who would come to the polls, but every day that passes, our infrastructure gets worse and worse."

**Healthy Water Ohio:** Caucus members also heard presentations from members of the Healthy Water Ohio coalition - a group that in September unveiled its own proposal for a bond issue and other measures to grapple with Ohio's water issues.

Convened in 2013, the group set out to develop a long-term water management plan for the state. Their roadmap - the [Healthy Water Ohio Report](#) - which recommends boosting research, conducting a wide ranging needs assessment and creating the Ohio Water Trust along with a supporting \$100 million state bond initiative.

Ohio Farm Bureau Vice President for Public Policy Adam Sharp said the plan's recommended amount of \$250 million to be put into the trust fund each year is just "a discussion point." But he said the group does believe the fund should be directed at local projects rather than large infrastructure projects that could quickly sap that money and for which other funding mechanisms are available.

"What are the items we want to have available to be funded through the bond because clearly some of the drainage infrastructure projects could take up all this money and much, much, much more," Mr. Sharp said. "We think the bonding measure could focus on agriculture, natural systems and community projects - maybe not necessarily fund the larger draining structure projects."

Josh Knights, executive director of the Nature Conservancy in Ohio, said that based on feedback obtained during the plan's creation, the group created several principles to guide the design of a water bond. Key among them is that the bond should be used to address root causes of water and infrastructure issues rather than treat symptoms, he said.

"While it is important to treat water for drinking in the near term to keep our communities safe, our efforts need to eventually shift to preventing the problem in the first place," Mr. Knights said. "In the long term, this should result in a more cost-effective approach to a solution."

Other principles for the clean water bond include:

- Applying a science-driven approach when divvying up resources
- Prioritizing long-term or permanent solutions over temporary activities
- Prioritizing long-term nutrient reduction
- Including green infrastructure
- Focusing on unmet gaps and avoid diverting existing funding from other sources
- Applying adaptive management to continually improve the effectiveness of the trust and the programs it funds

The group also foresees a financial role to be played by the agricultural industry, which played a role in developing the plan. "The agricultural industry needs to be a funding partner in identifying and providing resources to supplement or maybe even match public funding," Mr. Knights said.

For additional information on water quality issues, please contact CCAO staffer Brian Mead at [bmead@ccao.org](mailto:bmead@ccao.org) or 614-220-7982.

## Counties are responding to PSAP certification deadline



83 of our 88 counties have already filed their Wireless PSAP Certification Form with the Ohio 9-1-1 Program Office to verify the number of wireless public safety answering points (PSAP) operated within the county. All of the 83 counties are in compliance with January 1, 2016, deadline to be operating no more than four (4) wireless PSAPs, or, if the county has a municipal corporation with a population of 175,000+, operating no more than five (5) wireless PSAPs. Failure to comply with this deadline would result in the county having its

Wireless 9-1-1 funding reduced by fifty percent (50%).

The Ohio 9-1-1 Program Office initially sent a letter in early September to all of the county 9-1-1 coordinators asking them to verify the number of wireless PSAPs currently operating in their respective counties by November 6. The provisions regarding the mandatory reduction in the number of PSAPs and the corresponding penalty for failure to comply are in Section 128.571 of the Ohio Revised Code.

For more information of if you have questions regarding this issue contact CCAO staff member John Leutz at [jleutz@ccao.org](mailto:jleutz@ccao.org) or (614) 220-7994

## Bills Introduced



**SB 234 CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM (Cafaro, C.)** To require specified public and nonpublic school officials to search the Uniform Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System within thirty days of a student's enrollment and to notify the county public children services agency if specified information is found during that search. Am. 3314.03, 3326.11, 3328.24, 5101.132, and 5101.134 and to enact sections 2151.4210, 3313.675, 3314.60, 3326.60, and 3328.60.

**SB 235 PROPERTY TAXES (Beagle, B., Coley, B.)** To exempt from property tax the increased value of property on which industrial or commercial development is planned until construction of new commercial or industrial facilities at the property commences. En. 5709.45.

**SB 236 CIVIL ASSET FORFEITURE (Jordan, K.)** To eliminate civil asset forfeiture proceedings and to modify the law governing criminal asset forfeitures. Am. 2923.36, 2981.01, 2981.02, 2981.03, 2981.04, 2981.06, 2981.08, 2981.09, 2981.11, 2981.12, 2981.13, and 2981.14 and to repeal section 2981.05.

**HB 381 NUTRITION PROGRAMS (Ramos, D., Howse, S.)** To require the Director of Job and Family Services to request a federal waiver of time limits for certain Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients. Am. 5101.543

## Hearing Schedule



No schedule for next week