



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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‘Another Billion Back’ program gives a billion back to employers

Citing strong fiscal management and a well-executed investment strategy, Gov. John Kasich this week joined Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation (BWC) Administrator/CEO Steve Buehrer to announce a \$1 billion rebate to Ohio’s private and public sector workers’ compensation customers as well as a new investment in worker safety research and training.

The “Another Billion Back” program will offer eligible public employers, including counties, a rebate equal to 60 percent of premiums paid for the 2012 policy year (January through December 2012), which were paid in 2013. Should the BWC Board of Directors approve the proposal, BWC could begin issuing checks as early as October.

It is crucial that counties who opted to pay half their premium in May pay the remainder on-time by Sept. 2, 2014, in order to qualify for the rebate. Most of the parameters around the announcement remain the same as last year, but the dates have changed. Public employers must be in an active or reinstated status as of Sept. 5 to qualify for the rebate. This date provides three days following the premium due date (Sept. 2) to come into compliance.



Buehrer

Buehrer said the reductions will bring average rates for public employers down to the lowest level in at least 30 years.

“Counties appreciate the BWC’s sound investment and asset management strategy, resulting in the Administration’s recommendation to responsibly return the taxpayer dollars used by counties to pay premiums back to their local jurisdictions,” said Laura Abu-Absi, policy analyst for the County Commissioners Association of Ohio.

Additionally, “Another Billion Back” will offer several initiatives to improve the safety, health and wellness of Ohio’s workforce, including special safety training to help reduce injuries among firefighters.

For more information about the program, click [here](#).

Workforce experts may recommend change to WIA formula

An initiative led by Ohio’s 20 Workforce Investment Board (WIB) directors is underway to examine ways to modify Ohio’s distribution formula of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) dollars to Ohio’s 20 workforce investment boards in order to make local areas’ annual funding more predictable.

A sub-group of the directors was tasked to review possible changes that would bring more stability to the formula. Under the current distribution method, it is not uncommon for there to be swings year to year of 30

percent in the dislocated worker allocation, which accounts for the majority of local WIA funds. Such drastic swings can make budgeting and planning year-to-year quite difficult for areas.

Of course, as with any formula conversation, such modifications would have the potential to impact the amount of dollars a workforce investment area would receive.

County commissioners are to be consulted before any change can occur in the formula distribution, so please continue to refer to *Statehouse* and to keep in touch with both your WIB and Ohio Means Jobs/one-stop director as the conversation evolves.

While federal law dictates which factors a state must use in crafting a distribution formula, states do have some discretion in terms of how those factors are defined, which data sources are used and how each factor is weighed.

The various factors are run annually with the most recent data to determine the amount of WIA dollars each county would receive, and then each county's allocation is distributed to the WIB to which the county belongs. The WIB then is able to allocate the available dollars to their member counties as needed by the Ohio Means Jobs county centers/workforce development one-stops.

The subgroup of WIB directors looking at possible changes to the formula is currently planning to bring a recommendation to the full group of WIB directors for discussion next week. If favorably received, then county commissioners would need to be consulted before the process for change in the formula would begin at the state level.

For additional information, we suggest you contact your WIB director, Ohio Means Jobs County director, or CCAO Policy Analyst Laura Abu-Absi at labu-absi@ccao.org.

More water quality news: Ohio announces \$150 Million plus in targeted resources for water systems and farmers

As we discussed in last week's [Statehouse Report](#), water quality has taken center stage as the one of the main issues this summer. On Thursday, three members of Gov. John Kasich's Cabinet announced new multiagency initiatives aimed at protecting Lake Erie water quality and keeping public drinking water safe.

Jim Zehringer, Ohio Department of Natural Resources director; Craig Butler, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency director; and Dave Daniels, Ohio Department of Agriculture director, all were on hand at Kris Swartz Farm in Perrysburg to discuss the following initiatives.



Zehringer

- \$150 million in zero-interest loans for local water plants: \$150 million in no-interest loans for improvements to local drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities, reconfirming a single statewide testing protocol for microcystin approved by the Ohio EPA and US EPA, \$1 million for local water systems for testing equipment and training, and testing support from Ohio EPA's lab for any system that requests it;
- Support for agriculture: \$1.25 million for farmers to plant cover crops or install controlled drainage devices that protect against nutrient runoff and help support water quality, and;
- \$2 million for research: \$2 million to Ohio universities for further research on algal blooms.

Click [here](#) for more details on the initiatives. For additional information on water quality issues, please contact CCAO staffer Brian Mead at bmead@ccao.org or 614-220-7982.

Kasich appoints new director to lead innovation office

Gov. John Kasich this week announced the appointment of the director of a new office that aims to manage state programs to better assist people in need. Douglas Lumpkin, a former director of Franklin County's jobs and family services programs and a former Ohio JFS director, will head the Office Human Services Innovation.

Operating under the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS), the new office will work to better coordinate services across all public assistance programs, develop person-centered case management and assist individuals in staying out of poverty and finding gainful employment.

"We are all in this world together. The idea that someone is dependent? Forget about it. We're not going to be thinking about other human beings in that way," Kasich said.

At the announcement, held at the Licking County Ohio Means Jobs Center, the workforce development one-stop that is a part of the Licking County Department of Job and Family Services, Kasich and Lumpkin joined ODJFS Director Cynthia Dungey in speaking about the office's overriding goals of breaking down the silos in which many programs operate as well as refocusing on individuals being served, in part by leveraging technological advances.

For additional information, you can refer to the Office of Human Services Innovation [website](#) or contact CCAO Policy Analyst Laura Abu-Absi at labu-absi@ccao.org.



John Fisher, Licking County JFS Director; Cynthia Dungey, ODJFS Director; and Tim Bubb, Licking County Commissioner