



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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Lake Erie Legislative Caucus Hearing on Water Quality

The recent water crisis in Toledo has made water quality one of this summer's top issues. Last Friday, a special hearing was called for the Lake Erie Legislative Caucus to discuss the toxic algae blooms on Lake Erie. Co-Chairmen Senator Randy Gardner (R– Bowling Green) and Representative Chris Redfern (D- Catawba Island) along with 13 other members of the General Assembly hear over five hours of testimony from the public, agricultural leaders, and local government officials. More than 250 people were on hand for the hearing which was held right near the shores of Lake Erie at Maumee Bay State Park.

Harmful algal blooms (HAB) and their effect on the state's water supply is a very serious and complex issue facing the Ohio. The main contributor to the growth the HABs are large amounts of phosphorus being deposited into the lake by streams and rivers that drain into it. Phosphorus runoff comes from many sources including fertilizers used by farmers to grow crops, manure from livestock, overflow from sewer treatment facilities during large rain storms, and faulty household sewage septic systems.

Much of the testimony centered on Lake Erie's largest tributary to the western basin the Maumee River. Some recommended declaring the Maumee River a "distressed watershed." Declaring the Maumee River a distressed watershed would make it easier for regulators to impose tougher rules on the agricultural industry for its fertilizer runoff.

Agricultural leaders discussed the need for more research to help fix the problem. Lucas County farmer Bill Myers recommended banning the practice of applying manure to crop fields during winter on frozen soil. Senator Edna Brown (D-Toledo) recently introduced Senate Bill 356, which would add animal manure to the list of fertilizers which would be required for fertilizer applicator certification. [Senate Bill 356](#) is an expansion of [Senate Bill 150](#), which was passed earlier this year.

Peter Ujvagi, Chief of Public Policy and Legislative Affairs for Lucas County, testified on behalf of the Lucas County Board of Commissioners. He urged the committee members to take action. Recently, the Lucas County Commissioners passed a resolution calling for the [implementation of the International Joint Commission's 2014 report](#).



Peter Ujvagi testifies before Lake Erie Legislative Caucus

The report has 16 recommendations to reduce phosphorous loadings and harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie. For additional information on water quality issues, please contact CCAO staffer Brian Mead at bmead@ccao.org or 614-220-7982.

Committee on drug epidemic & impact on families begins hearings

Law enforcement officers, judges and university professors are among those lining up to testify before a summer study committee that on Tuesday began delving into issues surrounding the state's heroin and opiate epidemics.



Rep. Pelanda

Chairwoman Rep. Dorothy Pelanda (R-Marysville) said leading up to the first meeting that her office had received interest from an abundance of witnesses who would like to offer input before the Law Enforcement Perspectives on the Drug Epidemic & Its Impact on Families Study Committee.

As the Kasich Administration and the legislature continue to place an emphasis on cutting into opiate and heroin addictions, those who are experiencing the effects on the local level are eager to offer helpful advice from their perspectives, she said.

Tuesday's meeting in Clinton County at Wilmington's City Hall was the first of four scheduled for the 10-member panel. Witnesses testified on the topics of community impacts as a result of the rise in heroin use and the scope of the epidemic from a law enforcement perspective.

Upcoming meetings will be held Aug. 27 in Marion, Sep. 3 in North Canton and Sept. 9 in Cincinnati. Respective themes of the hearings will focus on the drug epidemic from an employment and academic perspective, coordination of law enforcement services and sentencing issues and alternatives to incarceration from a judicial perspective.



Clinton County Courthouse

Rep. Pelanda said committee members will be tasked with creating a report based on their findings, but it's uncertain as of yet whether they will result in legislation or the creation of a special subcommittee.

Other House members who were tapped to join the traveling study committee include: Rep. Jim Buchy (R-Greenville), Rep. Tim Derickson (R-Oxford), Rep. Christina Hagan (R-Uniontown), Rep. Bill Hayes (R-Harrison Twp.), Rep. Brian Hill (R-Zanesville), Rep. Sean O'Brien (D-Brookfield) and Rep. Nicholas Celebreeze (D-Parma).

Child and adult protective services funding work continues

Workgroups charged to make recommendations around how to invest one-time money for the adult protective services and children services systems by September 30th have been meeting weekly, but so far have not engaged in specific dialogue around the appropriations and how they may be most effectively allocated.

To date, the workgroups created in HB 483 have largely been engaged in high level dialogue on the current systems, from financing to programmatic gaps to legislative history. These conversations are designed to present different perspectives on the current systems and inform both the fiscal recommendations for this year as well as help shape potential policy or funding changes larger in scope for possible budget or legislative consideration on a longer timeframe.

Last week CCAO policy analyst Laura Abu-Absi presented to the joint workgroups on county financing, including revenues, current mandatory funding obligations, and examples of child welfare costs, which can be difficult to manage (particularly placement costs for children in custody).

Ashland County JFS Director Cassandra Holtzmann and her staff have presented to the children services funding workgroup on best practices as well as case management, and the Public Children Services Association of Ohio has presented on existing gaps in the system.

Licking County JFS Supervisor Kim Wilhelm presented yesterday on case management and best practices in the Licking County APS system, and there was also dialogue about the legislative history of adult protective services, including recent [CCAO advocacy on HB 49](#) late last year.

Led by Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Director Cynthia Dungey and Office of Health Transformation Director Greg Moody, respectively, the workgroups meet both separately and jointly twice a month. Also present is newly tapped [Office of Human Services Innovation](#) Director Doug Lumpkin.

For additional background on these workgroups, see the [August 1st edition](#) of *Statehouse Report*.

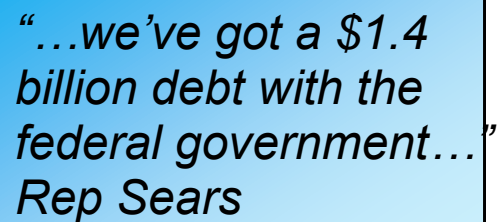
For additional information, or to share your thoughts on ways to improve service delivery in either or both of these program areas contact CCAO Policy Analyst Laura Abu-Absi at labu-absi@ccao.org or (614) 220-7996.

House members discuss unemployment compensation debt

Members of the Ohio House Unemployment Compensation Debt Study Committee convened Tuesday afternoon at Gorman-Rupp in Richland County to hold a hearing to discuss the unemployment compensation debt and its impact on Ohio citizens and the business community.

During the hearing, Beth DeLaney, owner of Spherion Staffing Services of Mid-Ohio, was among those who addressed the committee. Spherion is a staffing company in the Mid-Ohio area that oversees 10 offices locations within a 10-county region that hires and employs over 5,000 people per year, DeLaney said.

DeLaney expressed, "This has been a tough tax year for us ... As we continue to have double-digit growth for the past seven years, our exposure to the taxes continues to increase in high percentages year after year." She highlighted the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA), which provides for payments of unemployment compensation to workers who have lost their jobs. "FUTA increases for my company will cost me an additional \$600,000 in 2014," she said.



"...we've got a \$1.4 billion debt with the federal government..."
Rep Sears

Rep. Barbara Sears, who chairs the committee, explained, "The reason why we put this committee together is we've got an issue in the State of Ohio with our unemployment. Number one, we've got a \$1.4 billion debt with the federal government on our unemployment and so we need to look at how we repay that debt.

"Because we've got that debt, all of our businesses are being penalized ... Their unemployment costs for unemployment insurance are going up because we have that debt, and that will continue until we pay it back."

Thus, to help alleviate this issue, the committee is meeting in five different places throughout the state and is going to "really look at very specific issues on the unemployment debt and hopefully come out with a report. From there, we'll generate some legislation that will hopefully both get our unemployment program back into

structural balance, but also make sure that we're making it work for both those employees that need the help but also the businesses that are funding the benefit," Sears explained. Individuals with thoughts or questions should contact CCAO Policy Analyst Laura Abu-Absi at labu-absi@ccao.org or (614) 220-7996.

Commissioners and local leaders visit OSU's water quality laboratory

Lake County Commissioner Dan Troy and Erie County Commissioner Bill Monaghan participated in The Ohio State University's Ohio Sea Grant's 7th Annual Lake Erie Day for Coastal County Commissioners, Mayors, and Decision Makers.



Comm. Troy and Dr. Reutter

Local leaders toured Ohio State University's F.T. Stone Laboratory on Gibraltar Island at Put-in-Bay on Wednesday, August 20th. Presentations were made by experts from Ohio EPA, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and OSU Extension on key issues affecting Lake Erie and coastal communities. These included **presentations on the status and forecast for harmful algal blooms, water levels in Lake Erie, and the status of efforts to prevent harmful algal blooms.**



Comm. Monaghan and his wife, Judy

Leaders also took a science cruise on one of Stone Laboratory's research vessels where participants were able to pull a fish trawl and collect plankton, water, and invertebrate samples. A brief laboratory session to discuss what was observed and collected was held in the facility's water quality lab.

A special thanks goes to Dr. Jeffrey Reutter and his staff at OSU F.T. Stone Laboratory. For additional information on please contact CCAO staffer Brian Mead at bmead@ccao.org or 614-220-7982. For more information on Stone Lab, please visit their [website](#).

Ford ruled off ballot in 11th District State Senate Race

The Lucas County Board of Elections on Thursday removed Toledo Councilman Jack Ford as a candidate for the 11th District State Senate seat in the November election. The rejection of Mr. Ford from the ballot means that Democratic incumbent state Sen. Edna Brown will face Republican nominee Ernest McCarthy on Nov. 4 for the seat.

The Board upheld the challenge from Lucas County Democrat Party Chairman Steven Steel, who sought to have Mr. Ford disqualified as an independent candidate because he had voted a Democratic ballot in the May 6 primary. The fatal flaw in Mr. Ford's candidacy for the state senate came down to the vote he cast in the primary on May 6, the day after he filed petitions to run as an independent. Mr. Ford testified during the hearing that he was given and voted the ballot with Democratic candidates' names on it, even though he thought he had requested an issues-only ballot.

The Board's decision to uphold Mr. Steel's challenge and remove Mr. Ford from the ballot was based on a 2006 federal appeals court case and a subsequent Ohio secretary of state directive to all boards of elections that addressed the court ruling. That case involved similar factors in a challenge before the board of elections in Franklin County where the candidate, Charles Morrison, had voted a Republican ballot after he filed to run as an independent candidate for Congress. The U.S. 6th Circuit of Appeals ruling in the Morrison case upheld the decision in Franklin County to decertify the candidate.