DUANE MORRIS
GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES

State of Ohio Policy Update

Weekly Government Affairs Report

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Week in Review

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AGING

Health care experts and community leaders gathered Wednesday morning during the 2026 Healthcare Transformation Summit presented by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce for a conversation focused on dementia care and prevention. Featured panelists concluded that prioritizing investment in early prevention measures will economically support the state long term as age-related cognitive diseases become increasingly prevalent. Moderated by Bonnie Burman, past president of the Ohio Council for Cognitive Health and former director of the Ohio Department of Aging, the panel featured Rep. Andrea White (R-Kettering); Dr. Doug Scharre, medical director for Ohio State University's Center for Cognitive and Memory Disorders; Pat Krebs, board member of the Central Ohio Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association Early Stage Advisory Group; and Jennifer Carlson, state director for AARP Ohio. Regarding the state's role in supporting dementia care and treatment, White further underscored the value of investing in preventive measures. "My big mantra is invest now, or we will be paying later," she said. The representative added the state also needs to invest in "changing the way we think about diseases as we age."

FY26-27 BUDGET

Tax collections yielded almost $30 million or 1.1 percent more than expected, even after the Office of Budget and Management (OBM) updated its forecasts in light of FY26 revenues that far exceeded estimates. August tax collections netted $2.68 billion, $29.2 million more than forecast. Compared to this point in FY26, revenues are $370 million or 7.6 percent ahead.

DATA CENTERS

Build American AI, an industry group advocating for U.S. leadership in technology development, released a new report highlighting's Ohio's place as a hub for data center development, while a campaign group concerned about that development reported incremental progress on its efforts to restrict data centers in the Ohio Constitution and its assistance with local bans. The industry report, "AI and the Future of Ohio's Economy," highlights widescale capital spending in the tens of billions of dollars, competitive wages for skill trades workers needed to construct data centers and a "reindustrialization" of the region. Meanwhile, Conserve Ohio, the campaign group seeking a constitutional ban on large data centers, reported Tuesday that it has collected 130,000 signatures across all 88 counties.

EDUCATION

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) announced Friday it identified "significant testing anomalies" at 52 additional school buildings statewide as result of the ongoing investigation launched earlier this summer into spring 2026 state testing results at Columbus City Schools after the district self-reported testing anomalies at two high school buildings.

The state may add an additional school district to its list of districts in fiscal emergency, bumping the number to a total of three. Pending approval from the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) and Auditor of State's (AOS) Office, Barberton City Schools, which just last month approved a resolution asking the state to declare the district in a state of fiscal emergency, will join Mt. Healthy City Schools and Trimble Local Schools on the state's official list of districts in fiscal emergency.

ELECTIONS

Secretary of State Frank LaRose Wednesday announced that his office has removed 75 voter registrations from the voter rolls involving noncitizens as part of an ongoing citizenship verification and voter list maintenance effort. What began as a statutorily required annual review of the Statewide Voter Registration Database has evolved into an ongoing process using state and federal data, including records from the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV), Social Security Administration (SSA), and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program, the secretary of state's office said.

A federal judge Wednesday refused a request from Secretary of State Frank LaRose to put a stay on his ruling that found a requirement that Ohio voters provide proof of citizenship when registering to vote at an Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) deputy registrar violated federal law. LaRose and Ohio Registrar Charles Norman had asked the Judge Solomon Oliver to stay his ruling while they appeal it to the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, but he refused, saying they did not offer any new evidence or legal arguments to persuade him that they would have a likelihood of success on the merits of the appeal, or that they would be irreparably harmed absent a stay.

ELECTIONS 2026

The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) Friday announced the release of the online edition of its 2026 Ohio Election Guide, found HERE, and the updating of its Manufacturing Election Services Center, which can be found HERE, heading into Labor Day weekend and the unofficial start to the fall campaign season. OMA has published the Ohio Election Guide every two years for four decades, making it a longtime nonpartisan reference used by policymakers, Statehouse staff, journalists, advocates and engaged voters. *Hannah News* assisted with compiling much of the candidate information.

Patrick Havas appeared before a Mahoning County judge Tuesday where he pleaded not guilty to multiple misdemeanors stemming from an incident where he was accused of forcing his way through a crowd Sunday at the Canfield Fair where Democratic gubernatorial nominee Amy Acton was speaking. According to statements from the Mahoning County Sheriff's Office, Havas, 38, allegedly entered the Mahoning County Democratic Party tent at the Canfield Fairgrounds. As he forced his way through a crowd towards Acton, who was speaking, Ohio State Highway Patrol troopers with the executive protection unit confronted him. The law enforcement agencies said several fairgoers were knocked over as Havas tried to make his way toward Acton, and after he was detained, he was found to be in possession of brass knuckles and two pistols. The sheriff's office said no weapons were brandished or removed from their holsters.

Gov. Mike DeWine said Wednesday he's been "very much involved" in conversations the past few days since a security incident at the Canfield Fair involving Democratic gubernatorial candidate Amy Acton but declined to say if any additional security is now in place for candidates. DeWine also heavily disputed online chatter from political influencers claiming the Acton campaign overstated the nature of the threat. "That's a bunch of garbage. No one overblew it. Facts are facts. These are not good situations. They are anti-democratic ... our democracy, out state and our whole political process, it depends on people's ability not just to be on TV, it depends on people's ability to interact with people, real people," said DeWine, noting that he's been to the Canfield fair himself multiple times.

Democratic attorney general nominee John Kulewicz released the first ad of the general election campaign, a 30-second spot similar to his primary ad playing up the term "cool with" with his last name. "I am excited to share my first ad of the general election. This gives voters a look at a fresh face and shows what a lawyer, not a politician, can do for them as AG. I am grateful for the momentum my campaign is building that allows me to expand into a new medium as we race toward Election Day," Kulewicz said in a statement on the ad.
The Ohio Election Integrity Commission Wednesday delayed a hearing on a case involving the campaign committee of former Rep. Tom Brinkman, who is running to return to the Ohio House this year. Members of the commission complained that the case was put on their agenda without enough time for them to consider all of the relevant information. The secretary of state's office told commissioners that it had planned to present a settlement of the case to the commission, but the documentation was not ready.

The campaign of Democratic attorney general nominee John Kulewicz said Wednesday he has agreed to

participate in two debates hosted by Kenyon College and Youngstown State University, respectively, as long as Republican nominee Keith Faber agrees to do the same. The campaign released a letter sent to Faber's campaign, noting it had agreed in principle to participate in the Kenyon College debate to be held in Knox County, but said the Faber campaign "brushed off the invitation."

Visiting the DMV, waking up to an early morning alarm, slow WiFi, getting bit by mosquitos, and stubbing your toe are preferred by most Americans over politics today. But good news for those involved in politics: Americans prefer today's politics over billionaires, telemarketers, health insurance companies, artificial intelligence, Elon Musk, and root canals. Those were among the findings of the latest national poll conducted by the Bowling Green State University (BGSU) Democracy and Public Policy Network and YouGov. The web-based poll was conducted from Tuesday, Aug. 25 through Tuesday, Sept. 1, among 1,200 U.S. likely voters under the direction of Bowling Green State University professors Robert Alexander, Melissa Miller, David Jackson, and Joshua Boston, in partnership with YouGov. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.3. percent.

The following endorsements were made over the week:
- Americans for Prosperity-Ohio endorsed Michele Reynolds and Jane Timken for Ohio Senate and Denise D'Angelo, Mike Dovilla, Cliff Winkel, Shawn Stevens, Heidi Workman and Caleb Stidham for Ohio House.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Total nonfarm payroll employment increased by 162,000 in August, and the unemployment rate was unchanged at 4.1 percent, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported. The unemployment rate was unchanged at 4.1 percent in August, and the number of unemployed people changed little at 7.0 million. Both measures changed little over the year, BLS noted.

ENERGY/UTILITIES

State regulators are urging the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to adopt Ohio as a model for data center accountability in the Trump administration's review of a regional grid proposal to penalize artificial intelligence (AI) sites and cryptocurrency miners that fail to bring their own electric generation to PJM Interconnection's 13-state territory by shutting down their power before potential blackouts begin. The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) joined a host of voices Thursday including the Office of Consumers' Counsel (OCC) in separating Big Data from traditional manufacturing and large commercial customers whose operations could be unfairly compromised with all other rate classes -- including residential consumers -- by the "unique" demands of powerhungry digital installations. "The Ohio Federal Energy Advocate (FEA)," a PUCO office supported by the Public Utilities Section of the Ohio Attorney General's Office, "maintains that data centers are the large loads driving historic demand in the PJM footprint and, therefore, PJM should define large load to be specific to data centers, not all loads of a designated size."

The Trump administration and Republican senators say congressional permitting reform is ripe for bipartisan passage by the end of the year if not before a particularly fractious General Election and will restore America as a manufacturing and infrastructure powerhouse. U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright joined Chairman Ted Cruz (R-TX) of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation and fellow committee member Sen. Bernie Moreno (R-OH) for the topic du jour at last week's Energy Affordability Summit in the state capital. All said the mid-terms will likely quash public consensus but not private, bipartisan negotiations on federal permitting reform starred for prospective lame duck passage. The Promoting Efficient Review for Modern Infrastructure Today (PERMIT) Act sponsored by Rep. Mike Collins (R-GA) is now in the U.S. Senate after passing the House last December, with three other permitting reform bills also on tap in the lower chamber.

GAMING/GAMBLING

Staff and commissioners discussed the potential for iLottery sales at Wednesday's meeting of the Ohio Lottery Commission, as lower amounts of discretionary spending led to a drop in August sales. HB298 (Stewart-John) would legalize and regulate Internet gambling with a prohibition on sweepstakes games online, though Gov. Mike DeWine has said he opposes the bill due to concerns it would drive up addiction to gambling.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

All items on the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) regular and no-change agendas cleared the committee during Tuesday's meeting, though Reps. Mark Hiner (R-Howard) and Sean Brennan (D-Parma) each had separate questions regarding items brought forth by the Ohio Department of Commerce's Division of Cannabis Control (DCC) and Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' Division of Food Stamps.
Lawmakers with experience in health care and insurance matters offered their predictions for future policy development and lame duck session priorities at Wednesday's Healthcare Transformation Summit convened by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. House Insurance Committee Chair Brian Lampton (R-Beavercreek), House Health Committee Chair Jean Schmidt (R-Loveland), Senate Health Committee Chair Steve Huffman (R-Tipp City) and Senate Majority Whip George Lang (R-West Chester) participated in a panel discussion moderated by Alex Weingarth-O'Bryant, state director of government affairs for AmeriHealth Caritas, one of Ohio's Medicaid managed care companies.
Lawmakers officially have no plans to vote on legislation before the November election, after the Senate announced cancellation of three if-needed sessions in the coming weeks. The Senate cancelled if-needed dates for three upcoming Wednesdays - Sept. 16, Sept. 23 and Oct. 7. According to the Senate clerk's office, ifneeded committee hearing dates for Sept. 15 and Sept. 22 also were cancelled, but tentative committee plans for Oct. 6 were not. Both the House and Senate are next scheduled to be in session Tuesday, Nov. 10.
The Ohio Supreme Court recently unanimously upheld two laws passed as part of a biennial budget bill that had been challenged under the Ohio Constitution's "single subject" rule, reversing a lower court ruling that struck down those laws. Lawmakers passed the laws as part of 133-HB166 (Oelslager). The first, the "accident victim solicitation law," prevented health care providers from soliciting crime or motor vehicle accident victims for 30 days after the crime or accident occurred. The second, the "victim telephone privacy law," added a new section to the Ohio Public Records Act and exempted records containing victim phone numbers in police reports.

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) announced this week that tickets are now on sale at the Statehouse Museum Shop for the annual Haunted Tours at the Ohio Statehouse. Tickets are $16 per person for Statehouse Haunted Tours and are available for purchase now at statehouseshop.com. This is available for ages 12 and up. Those with specific accommodation needs or plan to bring a group of six or more children should contact tours@ohiostatehouse.org.

GOVERNOR

In honor of those killed in the Sept. 11, 2011 terror attacks, Gov. Mike DeWine ordered that flags be lowered from sunrise to sunset on Friday, Patriot Day. Friday is the 25th anniversary of the attacks.

Appointments made over the week include the following:
- Nancy P. Hollister of Marietta (Washington County) appointed and Jodey L. Altier of Marietta (Washington County) and David E. Vandenberg of Lowell (Washington County) both reappointed to the Washington State College of Ohio Board of Trustees, all for terms beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Feb. 17, 2032.
- John C. Harris, Jr. of Pickerington (Fairfield County) to the Central State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Aug. 21, 2026, and ending June 30, 2032.
- Phillip L. Trueblood of Lima (Allen County) reappointed to the Northeast Ohio Medical University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 22, 2026, and ending Sept. 21, 2032.
- Jessica J. Cunningham of Lima (Allen County) reappointed to the James A. Rhodes State College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Aug. 31, 2028.
- Vinita J. Clements of Westerville (Delaware County) to the Columbus State Community College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Aug. 21, 2026, and ending Aug. 31, 2027.
- Kevin J. Whitlock of West Unity (Williams County) and R. Brent Stevens of Ohio City (Van Wert County) appointed and John F. Poulson of Archbold (Henry County) reappointed to the Northwest State Community College Board of Trustees, all for terms beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending June 9, 2032.
- Cassondra L. McEldowny of Upper Sandusky (Wyandot County) to the Marion Technical College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending April 29, 2027.
- Michael L. Bennett of Zanesville (Muskingum County) reappointed to the Zane State College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending July 31, 2029.
- Michael J. Budzik of Logan (Hocking County) reappointed to the Hocking College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Aug. 26, 2029 and Benny G. Mitchell of Glenford (Perry County) reappointed for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Aug. 26, 2027.

- Tracy L. Carter of Akron (Summit County) reappointed to the Stark State College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Aug. 1, 2029 and Harun Rashid of Hudson (Summit County) reappointed for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Nov. 2, 2027.
- Richard A. Myser of St. Clairsville (Belmont County) reappointed to the Belmont College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending May 12, 2029 and Mark A. Romick of New Matamoras (Monroe County) reappointed for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending May 12, 2028.
- Kimberly A. Murnieks of Westerville (Delaware County) reappointed to the Board of Trustees of the Martha Kinney Cooper Ohioana Library Association for a term beginning Sept. 16, 2026, and ending Sept. 15, 2030.
- Jim Buchy of Greenville (Darke County) to the Ohio Standardbred Development Commission for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending June 30, 2029.
- Daniel J. Guttman of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Ohio Thoroughbred Race Fund Advisory Committee for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Jan. 31, 2029.
- George W. Lavender, Jr. of Chillicothe (Ross County) and Daniel P. Driscoll of Springfield (Clark County) reappointed to the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission for terms beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Sept. 3, 2029.
- Timothy D. Lanzendorfer of Dublin (Franklin County), Darren M. Shulman of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) and Kyle N. Erdeljac of Powell (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission for terms beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Aug. 21, 2030.
- Leslie A. Stalker of Morrow (Warren County) to the Advisory Council on Amusement Ride Safety for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Jan. 1, 2031.
- Kevin H. Elder of Pleasantville (Perry County) to the Reclamation Commission for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending June 28, 2031.
- Caitlyn A. Riederer of Westerville (Delaware County) to the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Council for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending June 1, 2027.
- Deirdre Murphy Beluan of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) and Tonya Y. Casey of Clayton (Montgomery County) appointed to the Commission on Minority Health for terms beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Sept. 2, 2027; Christina L. King of Springboro (Warren County) appointed for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Sept. 2, 2028; and Tony Ortiz of Beavercreek (Greene County), Celina Cunanan of Shaker Heights (Cuyahoga County) and Katherine E. Tullio of Rocky River (Cuyahoga County), all reappointed for terms beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Sept. 2, 2028.
- Carol L. Hofbauer of Powell (Delaware County), Carrie L. Spangler of Uniontown (Stark County) and Timothy A. Cross of Enon (Clark County) reappointed to the State Speech and Hearing Professionals Board for terms beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending March 22, 2028 and Nancy L. Mills of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) and Steven M. Griffin of Lewis Center (Delaware County) reappointed for terms beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending March 22, 2029.
- Michele A. Courtney of Lancaster (Fairfield County), Jeffrey N. Sczpanski of Circleville (Pickaway County), Cara A. Carramusa of Poland (Mahoning County) and Sanaz Armand Holcomb of Brecksville (Cuyahoga County) reappointed to the Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Athletic Trainers Board for terms beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Aug. 27, 2029.
- Robert A. Schuerger II of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Athletic Commission for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Sept. 2, 2029, and designated to serve as chairperson effective Sept. 4, 2026.
- Joseph D. Snyder of Kent (Portage County) reappointed to the Self-Insuring Employers Evaluation Board for a term beginning Sept. 4, 2026, and ending Aug. 22, 2030.
- Jarod N. Bach of Powell (Delaware County) and James C. Miles of Miamisburg (Montgomery County) reappointed to the Credit Union Council for terms beginning Sept. 23, 2026, and ending Sept. 22, 2029.
- Amy J. Casner of Columbus (Franklin County) and Joel B. Kratzer of Westerville (Delaware County) reappointed to the Ohio FAIR Plan Underwriting Association Board of Governors for terms beginning Sept. 19, 2026, and ending Sept. 18, 2028.

GREAT LAKES

Despite the successes of the H2Ohio initiative to reduce the flow of phosphorous into Lake Erie via Ohio's waterways, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) projects that significant, sustained additional funding and major increases in voluntary enrollment in the program are still needed to achieve the phosphorous reduction targets in the EPA's Action Plan for Lake Erie. In 2016, the U.S. and Canada adopted phosphorous reduction targets for Lake Erie, notching commitments from Ohio, Michigan and Ontario to take action to achieve a 40 percent reduction of phosphorous into Lake Erie by 2025. The USEPA 2025 Milestone

Report on that action plan, available HERE, finds that while significant progress has been made in those intervening years and states' implementation efforts are directionally correct, federal and state agencies involved in the effort must continue to grow and be sustained over the long term to reduce harmful algal blooms (HABs) and hypoxia.

***HANNAH NEWS* RACES TO WATCH**

Either candidate running for the Senate seat representing Canton and most of Stark County this November will be elected to the body for the first time, though neither the Republican Sen. Jane Timken (R-Canton) nor Democrat challenger Thomas West is a stranger to the Statehouse. Timken (R-Canton) is campaigning for the seat for the first time after her appointment in January 2025 following the death of the late Sen. Kirk Schuring. Her opponent, West, represented the 49th House District, containing Canton, from 2017-2022 before losing his bid for a fourth term to the district's current Rep. Jim Thomas (R-Canton).

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Matt Damschroder announced Friday that the agency is delaying implementation of a ban that limits the purchase of certain sugary drinks with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in Ohio. The ban, originally slated to begin Oct. 1, 2026, is being put on hold at the request of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA). The FNA recently requested Ohio to delay the ban so that FNA can issue a notice in the Federal Register and assess public comments prior to implementation. In response, Ohio will pause the start of the sugary beverage ban until it receives further guidance. ODJFS will communicate the delay to SNAP recipients and retailers and will provide both with details of the implementation once those are known. Wednesday's Healthcare Transformation Summit included a morning session on ways artificial intelligence (AI) and other new technology is transforming the industry, with the panel including Matt Kalina, founder and CEO of TandemStride; Meredith Williams, deputy chief medical officer at Oscar Health; Drew Bruggeman, director and pharmacist in charge at Hims & Hers; Kevin Dye, director of digital business partnership at Mercy Health; and Daphne Kackloudis, a partner at Shumaker. Ohio Chamber of Commerce General Counsel Tony Long served as moderator and opened by asking the panel about their organizations and how they are using AI now.

The latest Ohio Department of Health (ODH) update Thursday had 6,412 cyclosporiasis cases so far this year, up from 6,063 in late August (see *The Hannah Report*, 8/27/26), and 6,342 in the Sept. 3 update. August's count is now at 131, after increasing from 96 on Aug. 27 and 120 on Sept. 3 as past cases were identified.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Ohio State University (OSU) Board of Trustees approved a 3 percent raise for OSU President Ravi Bellamkonda during its recent public meeting, bringing the president's total salary to $1.4 million a year. In addition to the $42,000 pay boost, Bellamkonda was also awarded a $420,000 bonus for his performance. While the board did not publicly discuss the pay increase during the meeting, the measure was unanimously approved as part of the consent agenda at the end of the session.

Ohio is one of just two states to win a federal Talent Search grant meant to help students overcome barriers to furthering their education, Gov. Mike DeWine announced Wednesday at the 2026 Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) Trustees Conference. In a nod to his expiring time in office, DeWine also laid out his suggestions for future governors, lawmakers and college leaders to help the higher education sector adapt to changing dynamics and remain successful. DeWine said higher education leaders should keep everything on the table when it comes to partnerships and mergers among public and private institutions alike, but argues that the state should not try to establish a centrally administered system or force consolidation. He also suggested any proposals to do so would be unable to overcome opposition.

JUDICIAL

The Ohio Supreme Court has 10 days before Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) ballot-casting begins and some Ohioans can begin voting on a common pleas judgeship originally appointed by Gov. Mike DeWine and now caught up in a legal conundrum. With UOCAVA voting to begin Friday, Sept. 18,

justices must remove from the ballot suspended and terminated Sandusky County Judge Jon Ickes or leave him as the duly nominated GOP candidate. If he remains and prevails over his challenger, the Court must determine whether the governor gets to appoint another Republican instead. The high court suspended Ickes' bar license in August for two years and terminated him without pay for the same period due to a variety of colorful and crude improprieties.

LABOR

Workers, families, businesses and communities across Ohio are paying a steep price for legislators' failure to act on issues like child care, raising the minimum wage and other economic stimuli, according to the annual State of Working Ohio report, released by progressive think tank Policy Matters Ohio (PMO) on the eve of Labor Day. PMO says that challenges including suppressed wages, weakened worker bargaining power and underfunded public systems are not inevitable, and instead have resulted from decades of state-level policy choices.

The Buckeye Institute released a policy brief on expanding the state's workforce pipeline recently, noting CNBC's ranking of Ohio as the top state for business came with a 35th-place subranking on workforce that is down from 31st in 2025. "Despite its top overall rating, Ohio's limited population growth and softening labor force participation remain a hindrance. From January 2025 to June 2026, Ohio's labor force participation slipped from 62.9 percent to 61.6 percent, and the state lost approximately 74,000 jobs between January 2025 and May 2026. Retirements may account for some of that decline, but the numbers also suggest that Ohio still struggles to train and retain a ready-to-hire workforce. Without a labor force built for the 21st century, Ohio risks losing the economic ground it has so strategically gained," Buckeye Institute Senior Research Fellow Greg Lawson wrote in the brief.

MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM

Lawmakers, law enforcement and the administration need some time to see the new anti-fraud measures of SB315 (Schaffer-Craig) in action before deciding what steps to take next to control Medicaid misspending. That was the message from panelists addressing Medicaid waste, fraud and abuse during Wednesday's Healthcare Transformation Summit convened by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. Brian Perera of ZHF Consulting, formerly Ohio Senate majority budget director and Ohio State University lobbyist, moderated the discussion among Attorney General Andy Wilson, Ohio Department of Medicaid Director Scott Partika and Rep. Mike Dovilla (R-Berea), a key player in development of the Medicaid policy changes in SB315. Perera asked the panelists what's yet to come on the issue in lame duck or the next General Assembly. "I don't know that there's a great appetite at this point to move ahead in an aggressive way," Dovilla said, noting the bill was only signed in early July and is not yet in effect.

NEWS MEDIA

The *Blade* reported Tuesday that its ownership group, Block Communications, is exploring a sale of the newspaper and its assets and will publish the final edition at year's end if it can't do so.

OHIO HISTORY

As part of the state's ongoing semiquincentennial celebrations, America 250-Ohio has launched the Ohio Sports Forum, a three-part series of live conversations moderated by Lt. Gov. Jim Tressel bringing together some of the most celebrated figures in Ohio sports history. The series seeks to spotlight athletes, coaches and leaders who have helped shape the state's sports legacy. The program also falls in line with America 250-Ohio's theme for September: "Ohio Plays: Sports and Wellness."

The Ohio Statehouse marked the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks this week with a memorial service and flag planting.

PARKS/RECREATION

Skywatchers statewide are invited to see a unique tribute to America to be held above nine different Ohio State Parks Lodges starting on Saturday, Sept. 12. Select lodges will host a one-of-a-kind illuminated drone show and patriotic tribute honoring both America's 250th anniversary and the 25th anniversary of the Sept.

11 attacks.

PEOPLE

Sarah Ingles, House minority chief of staff and general counsel, and Ben Leland, son of appellate judge and former lawmaker David Leland, announced over the weekend the birth of their child. Their daughter, Daphne June Hawk, was born Saturday.

The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) announced its chief legal counsel, Sara C. Clark, will become the association's deputy chief executive. Clark has been chief legal counsel since 2015, previously served as deputy director of legal services and also served as interim CEO during a leadership transition.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Buckeye State has cut Labor Day Weekend traffic deaths by nearly half this year, the DeWine administration announced Tuesday, and improved 2024 numbers by a third to reduce accident fatalities over the holiday weekend in the last two years. The numbers come off an 80 percent spike in July Fourth travel deaths, however, and the lowest number of Memorial Day traffic fatalities in 18 years -- a wild swing in fatal accidents that still awaits the Ohio State Highway Patrol's (OSHP) final tally for the "100 Deadliest Days of Summer."

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