



Bill Would Create Agriculture Designations

Legislation from Representatives Roy Klopfenstein and Darrell Kick is moving quickly. [House Bill 162](#) would create several designations that are agriculture related. They are as follows:

- March 21st – Agriculture Day
- An end week of February – FFA Week
- October 12th – Farmers Day
- The week ending with the second Saturday of March – 4-H Week

The OFMA was able to submit comments in support of the bill before the House Agriculture Committee on May 16, 2023. Kirk Bloir from OSU Extension presented proponent testimony. The bill has already been favorably reported by the committee and awaits a vote by the full House of Representatives.

Fraud Reporting Legislation

Senator Tim Schaffer has introduced [Senate Bill 91](#) regarding fraud reporting and education. This bill is supported by Auditor Faber and several local government groups, including the County Commissioners Association. The intent is to catch fraud and abuse sooner than would normally be uncovered during an entity's financial audits.

- Requires the Dept. of Administrative Services to administer training material (created by the State Auditor) about Ohio's fraud reporting system and how to report fraud, waste and abuse to each new employee or elected official upon taking office or beginning employment with a public office (fair board members are not considered elected officials);
- Requires officials and employees to confirm receipt of the material within 30 days of taking office via signature;
- Requires the training to be administered every 4 years;
- Requires all of the following to report violations of laws, misuse of resources or a cybersecurity event immediately to the AOS via the fraud reporting system:
 - Elected officials.
 - Public appointments
 - Individuals with fiduciary duty to a public office
 - Supervisors in a public office
 - Public employees responsible for processing expenses of their office
- States individuals who recklessly fail to report fraud may be found as have committed dereliction of duty;
- Also allows employees to file written reports of violations to their supervisors;
- Bans disciplinary action against individuals who report fraud;

There is an amendment scheduled for next week that would remove the cybersecurity provisions (to be included in a separate bill) and remove language making recklessly failing to report fraud a dereliction of duty.

State Budget Process On-Going

The first half of odd numbered years are dominated by debate on the state's biennial budget bill. The process starts with the Governor's proposal, which has been introduced as [House Bill 33](#). The House passed their version of the proposal on April 26, 2023, by a vote of 77-19. The House made some significant changes to the Governor's proposal. The bill is now being considered by the Ohio Senate, who is expected to make significant additional changes. The process will culminate with a conference committee in June to craft a final bill for enactment.

Among the notable changes in the House were regarding tax policy. The House version reduces, beginning in tax year 2023, the number of income tax brackets, by consolidating the lowest bracket (2.765% for income between \$26,050 and \$46,100) with the second lowest bracket (3.226% for income between \$46,100 and \$92,150). Reduces the rate of that new lowest bracket to 2.75%. The Senate will also be looking at tax policy and could propose even great reductions.



The Ohio Fair Managers Association has been advocating for a substantial increase in the Ohio Department of Agriculture budget line Item GRF 700501 that is used to reimburse county and independent agricultural societies for their Junior Fair activities. Rod Arter, OFMA Past President, testified before the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources on March 21, 2023, regarding this request. The House version of the budget did increase the junior fair line item to \$760,000 per year. (this represents double the

investment from the as-introduced version). The House version also appropriates \$4.7 million in the second fiscal year to be used to support county and independent agricultural societies.

Roger Smith testified before the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee in favor of the House version of the bill on May 3, 2023. OFMA members are encouraged to contact their Ohio Senators requesting they support the appropriations for fairs.



In addition to the traditional appropriations for the Ohio Exposition Commission, the bill includes \$95 million per fiscal year for EXPO 2050. This will be used for the renovations to the State Fairgrounds, a priority project for the Governor. Virgil Strickler testified on behalf of the Expo Commission before the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources regarding the budget requests and plans for grounds renovations. OFMA is also supporting the appropriations for the State Fairgrounds.

4-H Legislation Has Hearings

Legislation was introduced in 2022 to require schools to provide students with excused absences for participating in 4-H activities. Representatives Thomas Hall and Rodney Creech have reintroduced the concept through [House Bill 135](#). This version allows for excused absences for 4-H and FFA activities. The bill does not allow these excused absences to occur during scheduled state testing or during a period of time the student might otherwise be disciplined, suspended or expelled. The OFMA formally weighed in with proponent testimony for the May 23, 2023 hearing before the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Other proponents include, OSU Extension, the Ohio Association of Agricultural Educators, The Farm Bureau, several FFA and 40H students and GOSA. The committee seems very much in favor of the legislation.

August Election Teed Up

The Ohio legislature has approved a measure, SJR2, that would do two things:

1. Provide for an August 8, 2023 special election.
2. On the August ballot would be a constitutional amendment to raise the threshold to change Ohio's constitution to 60% of the vote, from the current 50% +1.

The issue will appear on the August ballot as Issue 1. This highly publicized proposal will bring about many competing messages. Several large business groups like the Ohio Farm Bureau and the Ohio Chamber of Commerce have come out

in support of the initiative. They are not supporting the effort because of social issues (like a possible reproductive rights amendment proposal) but because of efforts to put issues such as increasing the minimum wage on the ballot. Opposing the measure of union groups and reproductive freedom organization, who view Issue 1 as a way to squash their ballot initiative effort. Expect to hear a lot more about this issue over the next couple of months.

Catalytic Converter Legislation

Representatives Bob Young and Bill Roemer have introduced legislation in response to the increase in catalytic converter thefts in Ohio. The bill, [House Bill 110](#), would make catalytic converters a special purchase article, requiring scrap metal dealers who purchase them comply with additional requirements. The bill prohibits a person from selling more than one catalytic converter per day, enhances penalties for theft of a catalytic converter, and creates other regulations. Catalytic converters are a high value item and has made them an increase target for theft at business and of person use vehicles. HB 110 is making progress through the House Criminal Justice Committee.

Minimum Wage Legislation and Ballot Initiative

As is the case every General Assembly, legislation has been introduced to increase Ohio's minimum wage. This year it is [House Bill 96](#). HB 96 is sponsored by Representatives Dontavius Jarrells and Ismail Mohamed. Under the bill the minimum wage would increase \$1 per year until it reaches \$15 in 2028, after that the rate would increase based on inflation.

Separately, a group called Raise the Wage Ohio is pursuing a statewide ballot initiative. They recently had their language certified by the Ohio Attorney General's office and the Ohio Ballot Board. This proposal would take the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in January 2026.

Youth Employment Bill Passes Senate – Making Progress in House

Senator Tim Schaffer (R) has reintroduced [Senate Bill 30](#) regarding youth employment. The bill would allow those under 16 to be employed after 7pm during school year. It would state that with parent or guardian's permission, those under 16 could work until 9pm. The Ohio Senate has already favorably passed SB 30 by a vote of 25-7. The bill was then considered by the House Commerce and Labor Committee which has reported the bill. It now awaits action by the full House of Representatives.

Strickler to Retires from the Expo Commission

The Ohio Exposition Commission has announced that the 2023 State Fair will be Virgil Strickler's last one as General Manager. After nearly 30 years with the Expo Commission, Mr. Strickler is retiring. To commemorate his dedication and service to the fair, the Youth Reserve Program is being renamed in his honor. The state will under go a nationwide search for Strickler's replace. That search committee will be led by ODNR Director Mary Mertz.

How to Contact Your Lobbyist

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