

The League of Women Voters of Ohio



Know Your Ohio Government

*The definitive guide for Ohioans who want to
learn how to influence government policies.*

Education Fund
10TH EDITION 2019

The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund is indebted to the many individuals in state government and organizational partners who generously provided information for this revision.

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LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of Ohioans in government and works to increase understanding of major public policy issues. The League has 3,000 members and more than 30 local Leagues across Ohio.

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Introduction

The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund first published *Know Your Ohio Government* in 1964 as a guide to the state's system of political organization and policy making. Each edition since has incorporated the many changes that have taken place in the laws and governance of the state of Ohio. This edition includes recent changes in state government, including a new process for drawing congressional districts, the expansion of school voucher programs and changes to school funding, and the creation of commissions aimed at reducing the number of Ohioans without health insurance and addressing the needs of immigrants who have moved to the state.

This publication is offered to the people of Ohio as a resource for understanding and participating in state government. The strength and effectiveness of our democratic form of government depend on the informed and active participation of everyday Ohioans in government and the political process.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund is a nonpartisan educational organization that seeks to increase public understanding of major public policy issues and to promote awareness of the options available in government decision making. The League also provides educational services, research, publications and conferences to enable members of the public to take part more effectively in the democratic process.

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This is Ohio

The “Buckeye State” was admitted to the Union on March 1, 1803 as the 17th state. Indiana borders it on the west, Michigan and Canada on the north, Pennsylvania and West Virginia on the east and Kentucky and West Virginia on the south.

Ohio ranks 34th in land area of the 50 states, with 44,825 square miles. A 2010 demographic profile by the U.S. Census Bureau placed its population at 11,536,504, making it the seventh most populous state in the country. Ohio’s central location puts it within a 600-mile radius of 60 percent of the U.S. population, and 50 percent of Canada’s population.

A temperate climate and adequate rainfall are suitable for growing a wide range of agricultural products. Lake Erie, the Ohio River, and numerous other inland lakes and rivers provide an abundant water supply.

The Industrial Revolution played a major role in Ohio’s development. Manufacturing is the largest of Ohio’s major economic sectors based on gross domestic product. Ohio’s educational institutions and private research facilities have core strengths in advanced manufacturing, biosciences, instruments and controls, power and propulsion, and information technology. In recent years, Ohio’s economy has become more service oriented (the service sector is expected to account for virtually all job growth between 2012 and 2022, according to the Ohio Bureau of Labor Market Information). The state also plays a major role in emerging technologies.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau count, Ohio’s largest cities are Columbus (850,106), Cleveland (388,072), Cincinnati (296,943), and Toledo (279,789). Of these, only Columbus showed growth in the period 2002-2010.

State Flower

The red carnation was adopted in 1904 as a posthumous tribute to President William McKinley, who was born in Niles, Ohio. The red carnation had been McKinley’s favorite lapel decoration.

Brief Look into Ohio’s Early History

The area that is Ohio today has a rich history that predates statehood. Archaeological studies show that Hopewell and Adena cultural groups lived in the region

approximately 5,000 years ago. They built more than a thousand ceremonial mounds around the state. The Serpent Mound in southwestern Ohio and the Newark Earthworks in eastern Ohio are the most famous.

The first permanent settlement of Europeans was established at Marietta in 1788. In 1795, representatives of the Wyandot, Delaware, Shawnee, Ottawa, Miami, Chippewa, Potawatomi, Kickapoo and other tribes signed the Treaty of Greenville with the United States government. According to the Treaty, Native American communities were relegated to live in north central and northeastern Ohio. Both European settlers and many Native Americans refused to honor the agreement, resulting in violent conflicts between the two groups. Most Native Americans who lived in Ohio during this time were gone by 1850.

Members of the Lakota and Dakota tribes began moving here in the 20th Century, because Cleveland was a relocation city when the U.S. Government relocated Native Americans from reservations in South and North Dakota.

Under the Articles of Confederation, the U.S. Congress in 1784 enacted an ordinance for governing the western lands ceded by New York, Virginia, Massachusetts and Connecticut. It was superseded by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which became the basis for the formation of six states in the territory, including Ohio. The ordinance is at: <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=8&page=transcript>. The legislation created a three-stage process for turning the territory into states, listing rights for inhabitants, banning slavery and encouraging but not requiring education.

State Economy

According to a 2018 Ohio Development Services Agency report, if Ohio were its own nation, it would have the 35th largest economy in the world. The estimate is based on gross domestic product, which is the total value of goods produced and services provided annually.

State Flag

Architect John Eisemann designed Ohio's flag in 1901. The Ohio flag is the only pennant-shaped state flag in the United States. The swallow-tailed shape symbolizes Ohio's hills and valleys; the red and white stripes represent roadways and waterways; the initial "O" and the buckeye are represented by the white circle with its red center; the stars grouped around the circle represent the original 13 states of the Union; and the four extra stars represent Ohio's status as the 17th state.

In the first stage, the U.S. Congress appointed a governor, a secretary, and three judges who were large landholders and residents to govern the new territory. The second stage could begin when 5,000 free men lived in the territory. The settlers were allowed to elect a General Assembly, or legislative body, to represent them. The first General Assembly met in Cincinnati in 1799 and consisted of the governor, the Legislative Council, and the House of Representatives.

Representatives, who were elected by men who owned at least 50 acres in the territory, had to be men and “be possessed of 200 acres of land.” The U.S. Congress selected the five members of the Legislative Council from ten nominees submitted by the U.S. House of Representatives. The Legislative Council members were required to own 500 acres of land. All Ohio public officials had to fulfill certain residency requirements as well. Edward Tiffin was elected the first speaker of the House, and William Henry Harrison was elected the territory’s representative to Congress.

The third stage required that 60,000 people live in the territory before it could apply for statehood and draft a constitution, which had to contain many of the basic rights in the U.S. Constitution. The second General Assembly met in Chillicothe from November 1801 to January 1802, and though the census showed 45,000 inhabitants, it applied for statehood, arguing the population would soon reach 60,000. Congress agreed and authorized the formation of a government for Ohio on April 30, 1802. That November the first Constitutional Convention convened in Chillicothe. With Edward Tiffin as president, the delegates drafted and adopted Ohio’s first Constitution.

The first election for governor, General Assembly, and officials of the nine newly created counties was held in January 1803. Edward Tiffin became the first governor of Ohio.

The capital was located in Chillicothe until 1810, moved briefly to Zanesville, and then returned to Chillicothe until 1816, when Columbus became the permanent capital.

Statehood . . . 150 Years Later

On August 7, 1953, Ohio was formally admitted to the Union by a joint resolution of Congress. Just as Ohio prepared to celebrate its 150th anniversary in 1953, researchers discovered that a joint session of Congress had never declared Ohio a state. No state before Ohio had been formally admitted through a joint resolution, as the practice began in 1812. Therefore, in 1953, Congress formally declared Ohio a state—retroactive to 1803. President Eisenhower signed the joint resolution on August 7, 1953.

Founding Documents

The Ohio Constitution, which will be discussed in more detail below, and the Northwest Ordinance, discussed in Chapter 1, are among the founding documents that created and still guide Ohio and its government. Others include the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The Ohio and U.S. Constitutions are often characterized as living documents, meaning the citizens or their representatives can change them.

The Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence lays out the principles on which the United States government is founded and, some historians argue, created the American identity. Virginian Thomas Jefferson wrote the declaration based largely on other states' calls for independence, the Virginia Constitution and the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which says, "rights are the basis and foundation of government." He was also influenced by the moral and political philosophies of John Locke, Lord Kames and Algernon Sidney. Jefferson combined their ideas to write that all men are created equal; born with inalienable rights such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and that governments derive their power at the consent of the people.

The colonists were already at war with the British when the Continental Congress adopted the declaration in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. The document summarizes abuses by King George III and the British Parliament, in which the colonists had no representatives. The declaration establishes grounds for revolution and argues that the people of the 13 United States are bound by duty to sever political ties to England and form their own government. The declaration had the practical effect of rallying support for revolution within the colonies and allowed the American colonists to officially ally themselves with the government of France and secure French assistance in the Revolutionary War. A transcript can be found here: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

The U.S. Constitution

The U. S. Constitution is the fundamental law of the nation and creates the federal government. It is actually the country's second constitution. The first, called the Articles of Confederation, was adopted Nov. 5, 1777 and ratified by all states by 1781. But the ineffectiveness of the weak central government created under the Articles spurred Congress to call a Constitutional Convention in 1787.

The Constitution adopted by delegates and later ratified by states created three branches of government — the legislative, executive and judicial — with capabilities to check one another’s powers. To address the wants of different states and political philosophies, creating the Constitution took a great amount of compromise. Large states’ desire for representation according to population led to the apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives according to the most recent census. Small states’ desire for equal representation led to the designation of two senators per state. The electoral college used to elect the president was another compromise. Despite strong anti-slave sentiment among delegates of northern states and some southern, slavery was protected in order to secure votes of slave-holding states in favor of the Constitution.

By June 1788, nine states had ratified the Constitution, but it became clear that in the remaining states the anti-federalist camp that opposed a strong central government would favor a bill of rights confirming individual and states’ rights. The promise that the bill would be forthcoming helped to eventually gain unanimous ratification by the states.

Article V of the U.S. Constitution provides the authority to amend the Constitution. To propose an amendment either two-thirds of both the U.S. House and Senate must vote for the proposal, or a constitutional convention must be called by two-thirds of the states. Three-fourths of the states must then approve the amendment before it can become law. A transcript of the Constitution can be found here: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

The Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights are the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The amendments place prohibitions and limits on governmental power and guarantee individual liberties such as freedoms of speech, religion and the press; the right to bear arms; protection from unreasonable search and seizure; trial by jury and more. Many of the amendments directly address the grievances made against the British government in the Declaration of Independence.

The 10th Amendment gives states and the people all powers not delegated to the federal government or prohibited by the Constitution. A transcript can be found here: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>.

Since passage of the Bill of Rights, 17 amendments have been ratified, including the 13th, abolishing slavery; 15th, establishing African-American men’s right to vote; 19th, establishing women’s right to vote; 24th, abolishing poll taxes; and 26th, lowering the voting age to 18. A transcript can be found here: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/amendments-11-27>.

As of May 2018, 37 states, including Ohio, had ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, which says, “Women shall have equal rights in the United States,” and prohibits sexual discrimination. If and when a 38th state ratifies the amendment,

which Congress proposed in 1972, it becomes law. It would be the first mention of women in the U.S. Constitution.

The Ohio Constitution

The Ohio Constitution is the fundamental law of the state and creates the state government. Ohio has had two, both of which include a Bill of Rights, largely reflecting those in the U.S. Constitution, including the provision that powers not delegated to the government remain with the people of the state.

The first Ohio Constitution was adopted in 1803 and established a relatively weak government in which the legislature held the vast majority of the power. Delegates to Ohio's first Constitutional Convention gave all white males who paid taxes or worked on the state's roads the right to vote but failed by one vote to give the right to African-American males.

The Constitution gave the legislature the authority to appoint all judges and high-ranking state officials other than the governor and gave the governor no ability to veto legislation and check the General Assembly. Over the next five decades, Ohioans concluded the original Constitution had given too much power to the legislature and that some provisions in a state of now 2 million residents were impractical. The citizens also had become dissatisfied with taxation, mounting debt and gerrymandering. After failed tries, the General Assembly called a Constitutional Convention that assembled in 1850.

The new Constitution, approved by voters in 1851, gave voters the right to elect judges and other high-ranking state officials such as the attorney general and secretary of state, limited the legislature's ability to incur debt, created the office of lieutenant governor and a third layer of state courts. The Constitution didn't give the governor veto authority but expanded the office's powers.

The state held its last Constitutional Convention in 1912. Delegates chose not to rewrite the 1851 Constitution but their work resulted in 33 amendments establishing workers rights, giving the governor the line-item veto, changing the legal process to reflect the rights of the accused guaranteed by the U.S. Bill of Rights, allowing voters to directly initiate constitutional amendments or new laws or reject laws passed by the legislature and more.

The state Constitution has been amended more than 100 times since. Amendments can be made through a joint resolution first passed by three-fifths of each house of the General Assembly and then a majority of Ohio voters, or by the voter initiative process discussed on page 117. See a transcript of the Constitution and amendments at <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/laws/ohio-constitution>. The most recent amendment, discussed on page 7 changes how Congressional districts are drawn and was approved by voters in May, 2018.

The Legislature

A legislature is a body of individuals elected by the people to enact laws on behalf of the citizens. The United States Congress is the federal legislative body, and the Ohio General Assembly is the state legislative body. Local legislative representation in Ohio is dependent on the local government structure. Each level of representation has the power to enact laws that fall within its jurisdiction.

Congress enacts federal laws, and the Ohio General Assembly enacts state laws. The laws enacted by Congress cannot violate the U.S. Constitution, and the Ohio General Assembly cannot pass laws that conflict with the U.S. or Ohio constitutions. In addition to representing citizens, the U.S. Congress and the Ohio General Assembly have the duty to impeach and oust members of the executive branch who have committed certain crimes while in office.

Beyond legislative representation, Ohio citizens have the constitutional right to propose state laws themselves through the initiative process, and to reject laws passed by the legislature through the referendum process. Both are explained starting on page 117.

Representation—Federal

The United States Congress is a bicameral legislature—that is, it comprises two houses or chambers: the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. The 100-member Senate is made up of two senators from each state. The 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are allocated to the states based on their populations as compared to the total U.S. population, but every state is entitled to at least one representative. Congressional seats, also called House seats, are divided among the 50 states after each federal decennial census. In 2010, Ohio’s population entitled it to 16 representatives for the following ten years. This represented a reduction by two representatives, as Ohio’s population grew more slowly in proportion to the population of other states. The next federal census will be conducted in 2020.

Until 2018, the Ohio General Assembly was empowered to draw boundary lines for congressional districts through the regular legislative process. As in many states, the party in power redrew district boundaries to favor the party in elections.

But under pressure from a coalition of organizations, including the League of Women Voters, the legislature agreed to propose an amendment to the Ohio constitution to limit the authority of the ruling party, with the aim of making districts

more competitive and forcing the parties and legislators to be more responsive to voters. Voters approved the amendment in May 2018, with at least 66 percent of the vote in each of the state's 88 counties.

Under the new system, the legislature will redraw the map, but at least half the members of each political party must approve it. If they fail, a seven-member commission consisting of the governor, state auditor, secretary of state and two legislators from each of the two major parties will be formed. At least two members of each major political party must approve the resulting map.

If they fail, the legislature can approve a map without minority support, but limitations on their ability to redraw districts for political advantage would be imposed and the map would be good for only four years instead of 10. Maps drawn by the legislature can be vetoed by the governor or voted down by referendum. The current congressional district map, established in 2012 by the General Assembly, can be found on page 9.

U.S. senators serve six-year terms, with one-third of the Senate elected every two years. Senators were originally chosen by the state legislatures, but with the passage of the 17th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, senators are directly elected by the voters. U.S. representatives are elected for two-year terms, all terms running for the same period. Both the senators and the representatives must be residents of the state from which they are chosen. In addition, a senator must be at least 30 years of age and must have been a citizen of the United States for at least nine years; a representative must be at least 25 years of age and must have been a citizen for at least seven years.

Although Ohio voters passed an amendment to the Ohio Constitution to enact term limits for federal- and state-level legislators, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that term limits on federal-level representation are unconstitutional and voided this provision of the 1992 amendment.

Representation—State

The Ohio General Assembly is also a bicameral legislature, comprising the Ohio House of Representatives and the Ohio Senate. Ohio's system of determining state legislative representation was changed in the 1960s as a result of historic U.S. Supreme Court decisions. The Court required both houses of bicameral state legislatures to be apportioned on the basis of population alone. Ohio voters approved a state constitutional amendment that established the current method of districting in 1967.

Article XI of the Ohio Constitution establishes 99 districts for the Ohio House of Representatives and 33 districts for the Ohio Senate, based on data from the federal decennial census. Voters elect one candidate to the General Assembly from each district, each of which must be approximately equal in population. Each House member represents about 110,000 Ohioans, and each senator about 330,000.

Ohio's Congressional Districts 2012-2022



Source: Ohio Secretary of State's Office, https://www.sos.state.oh.us/globalassets/publications/maps/2012-2022/congressional_2012-2020_districtmap.pdf

Because districts are drawn according to population, Ohio's urban centers have a larger number of representatives and senators compared to the rural areas. District boundaries are drawn every ten years, following the federal decennial census.

On November 3, 2015, voters in Ohio approved a constitutional amendment to create a bipartisan state legislative redistricting commission. A seven-member Ohio Redistricting Commission is made up of the governor, state auditor, secretary of state, one person appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one person appointed by the legislative leader of the largest political party in the House of which the speaker is not a member, one person appointed by the president of the Ohio Senate and one person appointed by the legislative leader of the largest political party in the Senate of which the president is not a member.

The new commission requires two members from the minority party, versus a single member under the former system. Under the amendment, maps drawn by the commission will be valid for 10 years if at least two commissioners from each of the two largest political parties vote for them. Should the maps be passed along strictly partisan lines, the maps would only be valid for four years. All legislative districts are required to be compact and made of "contiguous territory, and the boundary of each district to be a single non-intersecting continuous line." The amendment forbids district plans from favoring or disfavoring either political party. This will take effect on January 1, 2021. The population among House districts may not vary by more than plus or minus 5 percent. Senate districts are created by combining three contiguous House districts.

The maps on pages 12 and 13 show the current Ohio Senate and House districts established in 2012. These districts will remain in effect until 2022, when the Redistricting Commission will redraw General Assembly districts based on the 2020 census data.

The maps on pages 12 and 13 show the current Ohio Senate and House districts established in 2012. These districts will remain in effect until 2022, when the Redistricting Commission will redraw General Assembly districts based on the 2020 census data.

To be eligible for office in the General Assembly, a person must have resided for one year in the district he or she seeks to represent. Ohio senators are elected for four-year terms, half of the senators every two years. Representatives are elected for two-year terms. In 1992, voters passed an amendment to establish term limits

General Assembly

The term General Assembly refers both to the legislative body as a whole and to the two-year period that consists of two regular sessions that begin in January. The latter usage is usually preceded by a number to help differentiate among various two-year periods. The 133rd General Assembly is in session from 2019 through 2020, the 134th General Assembly will be in session in 2021 through 2022 and so on.

for state level legislators. Members of the Ohio Senate may serve two consecutive four-year terms, and Ohio representatives may serve four consecutive two-year terms. After a waiting period of four years, former General Assembly members may seek reelection to their former office.

Organization of the General Assembly

A new legislative session is assembled every two years, following the November elections. Ohio's Constitution specifies that the General Assembly begin the first regular session on the first Monday of January in odd-numbered years, or on the succeeding day if the first Monday is a legal holiday. The second regular session must begin on the same date the following year. There is no limit to the length of the regular session. During the regular session, the legislature generally meets on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Neither chamber may adjourn for more than five days without the other chamber's consent.

The General Assembly Open Meetings Act requires that all committee meetings of the General Assembly are open to the public. Full sessions of either chamber are open to the public as well. The Ohio Constitution, however, allows either chamber of the General Assembly to hold a closed session if two-thirds of the members present feel it necessary.

When the General Assembly is not in session, either the governor or the presiding officers of both chambers acting together may call the legislature into special session by proclamation. The purpose of the special session is limited to the specific issues in the proclamation.

Each chamber of the General Assembly chooses its own officers to preside over the legislative process. Leadership positions exist for majority and minority party legislators. There are different numbers of officers in the House and Senate, bearing different titles, but generally, the functions remain the same across chamber lines.

Once each chamber has convened and selected officers, it draws up the rules it will follow during the coming two-year period. The rules establish procedures by which the members must abide. Each chamber also creates a system of punishment for members found to have disobeyed rules. Punishment can include expulsion from the legislature by a two-thirds vote of the House or Senate members. Each chamber publishes a record of proceedings in its journal.

Finally, each chamber establishes a series of legislative committees to examine legislation more thoroughly and to allow for an open public discussion on the merits of proposed legislation. The leadership in each chamber determines committee membership. The most common committees in the General Assembly are called standing committees and are considered permanent throughout the two-year session. Other temporary committees are established on an as-needed basis, including joint committees, which are made up of members from both the House and the Senate.

Ohio's State Senate Districts 2012-2022



https://www.sos.state.oh.us/globalassets/publications/maps/2012-2022/ohiosenate_2012-2020_districtmap.pdf

The standing committees often have subcommittees to hear testimony, amend bills or prepare substitute legislation, and report back to the standing committee with a recommendation. While the number and title of committees may vary from session to session, each chamber generally has standing committees to deal with matters related to agriculture, commerce, education, elections, environment, finance, health, transportation, the judiciary, labor, local government, public utilities, state government, taxation, and human resources. Each chamber has a rules committee, the primary job of which is to schedule bills for debate and/or vote on the floor of the chamber on any particular day. There is also a committee in each chamber responsible for referring bills to committee (see How a Bill Becomes Law on page 18) and eliminating frivolous or duplicate bills.

The political party that has the majority of elected members in each chamber traditionally has political control of the committees, and thus names the chair and receives a majority of the seats on the committee. Each senator and representative serves on several committees.

Procedures of the General Assembly

Once the chambers of the General Assembly have established an organization to begin a new, two-year legislative session, the members can engage in the business of the General Assembly: legislating. There are two types of legislation considered in the General Assembly: bills and resolutions.

A bill is a proposal introduced in the General Assembly that seeks to enact new law, or to amend or repeal existing law. Bills may originate in either house and may be altered, amended, or rejected in the other. No bill may be passed until it has been reproduced and distributed to the members of that chamber. When committee hearings are held on bills, interested people may ask or be asked to testify before the committee either in support of or in opposition to the legislation being considered. This offers an opportunity for an individual or organization to make its wishes known directly to the legislators. After a bill has passed both houses of the General Assembly, it becomes an act, and once the act is signed by the governor and a 90-day waiting period passes, the act becomes law and is inserted into the Ohio Revised Code. Some acts are passed on an emergency basis and become law immediately after the governor signs them. The text below and chart on page 18 illustrate the path a bill must follow to become law in Ohio.

The other type of legislation the General Assembly may consider is called a resolution. Resolutions serve as formal expressions of the opinions and wishes of the General Assembly and do not require approval of the governor. There are three types of resolutions: joint resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and simple resolutions.

Joint resolutions are reserved for matters of great importance to the General Assembly. They are generally used to form joint legislative committees, propose amendments to the Ohio Constitution, petition Congress, and ratify amendments

to the U.S. Constitution. A joint resolution must pass both houses and be filed with the secretary of state. Proposed amendments to the Ohio Constitution are placed on the ballot at the next general election for approval by Ohio's voters. Concurrent resolutions are generally used as statements of policy by the General Assembly to resolve internal procedural matters. Simple resolutions pertain to matters in either the House or the Senate and usually are issued to commemorate a person, group, or event, or to state policy of just one of the chambers.

How Ohio Laws Are Made by the General Assembly

Introduction of a Bill

Ideas for bills come from various sources, including members of the public, interest groups, businesses, state agencies, and legislators. All bills proposed by a legislator must be reviewed by the Legislative Service Commission (LSC) for correct form before being introduced. A professional staff is employed by the LSC to draft bills and provide research services for members of the General Assembly. A bill must be sponsored by at least one legislator in order to be introduced in either house of the General Assembly. Any member of either house may introduce a bill, and that legislator becomes the bill's primary sponsor. Other legislators may sign as cosponsors. The primary sponsor manages the bill throughout the legislative process.

Bills are filed with the legislative clerk, who assigns each a number to be used throughout the legislative process in both houses. House bills are numbered HB 1, HB 2, and so on; Senate bills are SB 1, SB 2, and so on. Bills are introduced on the floor of either chamber when the clerk of the Senate or House reads the titles aloud during a regular session. To become law, the Ohio Constitution requires a bill to have three "considerations" on three different days in each house of the General Assembly. Introduction is the first of the three considerations.

Referral

After introduction, the bill is sent to either the Rules and Reference Committee in the House or the Reference Committee in the Senate, which reviews and normally assigns the bill to a standing committee for testimony, debate, and committee action. The referral of a bill to a committee is the second consideration of the bill.

Committee Hearings and Action

An important part of the legislative process takes place in committee, where the fate of a bill is usually determined. The committee examines and debates the bills assigned to it. Complex or controversial issues are often referred to a subcommittee for more thorough consideration or redrafting. The committee can either begin processing the bill or take no action, which essentially defeats the bill for the remainder of the session. If a committee wishes to take action on a bill, hearings are scheduled. In most cases at least two hearings are held on a bill, one for proponents and one for opponents. The committee may amend, rewrite, or combine

bills based on testimony gathered at public hearings conducted by the committee. The committee then votes either to report the bill favorably for consideration by the entire chamber or to postpone the legislation indefinitely, which defeats the bill. The consent of a majority of the committee members is required to take either action.

Rules Committees

Bills that have been favorably reported out by a standing committee are sent to the rules committee of that chamber. Each rules committee creates a calendar that lists when bills will be considered for debate and a full vote by the entire membership of the House or the Senate. This is important because only bills that are on the calendar can be voted upon. The rules committees have the power to prevent floor action on a bill by never scheduling a bill on the calendar.

Full Chamber Consideration

The bills sent to the entire chamber are given a third consideration, in the order listed on the calendar. The bill's sponsor begins the discussion by giving a review of the bill's purpose and content. Bills are then debated and amended according to the procedures of each chamber. All members present are required to vote unless they have gained permission in advance to abstain due to conflict of interest. The Ohio House votes through an electronic roll call system. The Ohio Senate calls the roll by voice. The bill can be passed, defeated, or postponed until later. To pass, a bill must attain a favorable vote by a simple majority of the membership: 50 votes in the House and 17 in the Senate. Emergency legislation—that is, a bill that contains language that would make it effective immediately upon approval by the governor—requires a two-thirds majority vote. A bill amending the Ohio Constitution requires a three-fifths majority before it can later be put before the voters.

After a bill passes one chamber, it is sent to the other, where it follows a similar procedure. If a bill is modified by the second chamber, it must be returned to the first chamber for approval of the changes. Both houses must approve the same version of the bill.

If the first chamber rejects the modifications, the second chamber may request that a conference committee be established to produce a version that both houses will approve. The conference committee comprises three members from each chamber. Once the committee has produced a compromise bill, both houses must then vote to accept the conference committee version. If the committee cannot reach an agreement acceptable to both houses, the bill is defeated. The legislature's data shows that during the 131st General Assembly, about 25 percent of bills were passed.

The Governor

A bill that has passed both houses is enrolled, printed in final form as an act, and signed by both the speaker of the House and the president of the Senate. The act

is then transmitted to the governor, who has three options he must take within 10 days. If the governor approves, he signs the bill and the act becomes law in 90 days unless otherwise specified in its provisions. Emergency or appropriation measures become effective immediately. If the governor does not approve of the legislation, he or she vetoes and returns the bill to the house of origin with the governor's written objections. Appropriation bills can be vetoed line-by-line, but other types of legislation must be vetoed whole. A three-fifths majority vote is required in both houses to override a veto. The governor's third option is to neither sign nor veto the act by the end of 10 days (excluding Sundays). The act becomes law following the same time lines as if it had been signed.

Legislative Service Commission

The Ohio Legislative Service Commission (LSC) was created by law in 1953, to assist the legislature in a number of ways. The members of the commission, who are legislators, appoint LSC's director. The director is responsible for hiring the LSC staff and ensuring that it provides nonpartisan drafting, fiscal, research, training, and other services to all members of the General Assembly. The LSC staff consists of attorneys, research associates, budget analysts, economists, librarians, and others, and is organized into research, fiscal, support, and administrative divisions. The research staff is divided into groups according to subject matter, while fiscal staff groups generally are organized by agency. A division chief oversees each group and reviews the work of all group members.

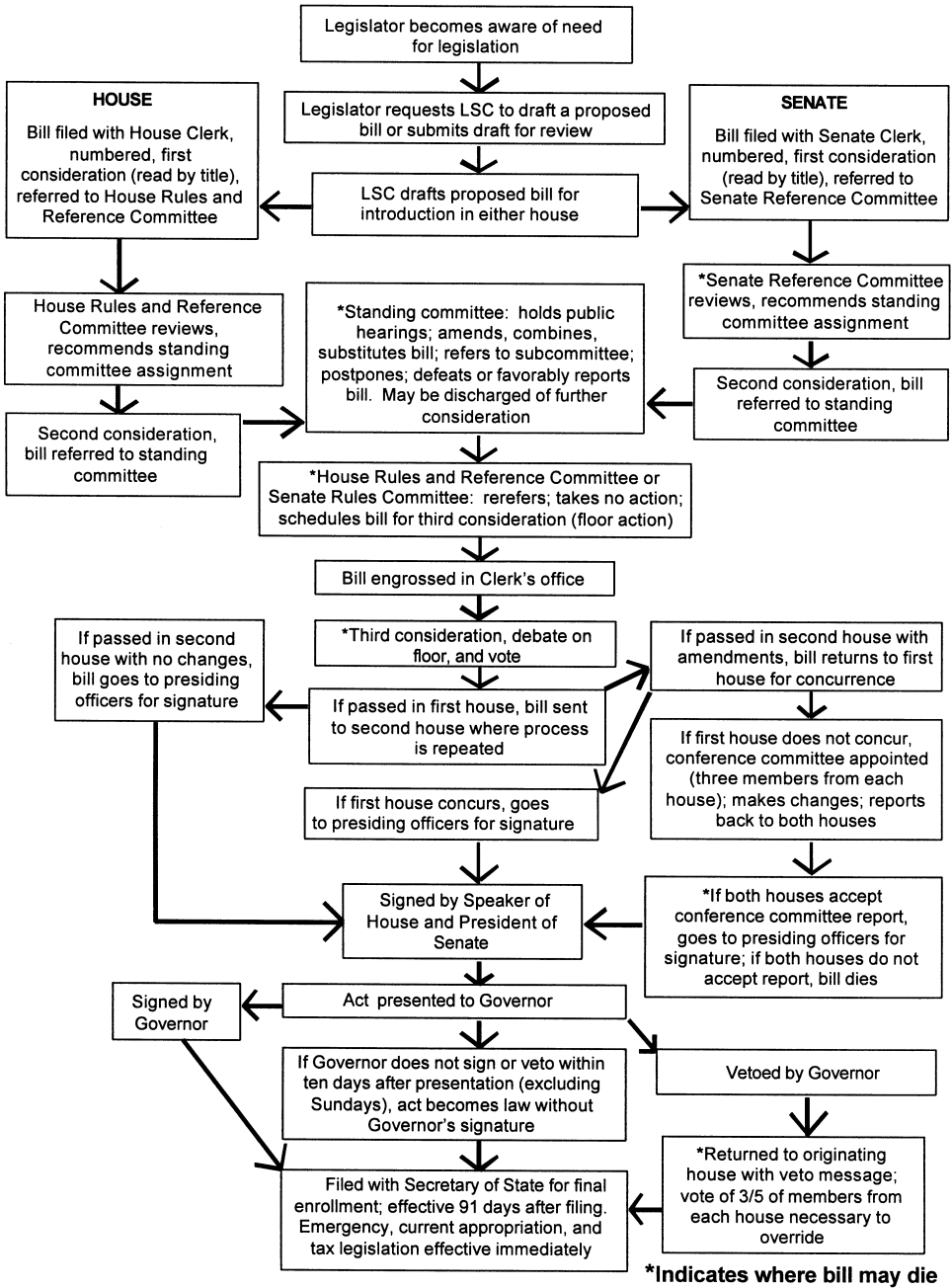
Key services include: drafting legislation, staffing committees, budget and fiscal analysis, legal, fiscal and technical research and drafting honorary resolutions and letters. The LSC staff operates a library that provides services to members of the General Assembly and the general public. Among the major reports staff produces and maintains are bill analyses, budget documents and fiscal notes and local impact statements.

Joint Legislative Ethics Committee/Office of the Legislative Inspector General

The Joint Legislative Ethics Committee (JLEC) was established by the Ohio General Assembly in 1994 to monitor compliance with Ohio's ethics law as it applies to the legislative branch. The committee consists of no more than 12 members, six from each major party and six from each legislative body. JLEC is also responsible for administering Ohio's lobbying laws. State law requires all paid lobbyists, or persons paid full-time or part-time to influence legislation, to register with the JLEC.

Employers of paid lobbyists must also register, and both employers and paid lobbyists must indicate the type of legislation in which they are interested. In Ohio, there is a small fee for registering. JLEC issues a card to lobbyists showing that they

How a Bill Becomes Law in Ohio



Source: Ohio Legislative Service Commission, *A Guidebook for Ohio Legislators, fifteenth edition*, <https://www.lsc.ohio.gov/documents/reference/current/guidebook/chapter5.pdf>

have registered. Volunteer lobbyists and those lobbying on their own behalf need not register. Registered lobbyists are considered to be engaged in influencing legislation when they promote, advocate, or oppose passage, modification, defeat or executive approval or veto of legislation by direct communication with a member of the General Assembly.

The Office of the Legislative Inspector General (OLIG) is the administrative office of the JLEC and is responsible for the actual implementation of the provisions of the ethics and lobbying laws. The OLIG is a non-partisan office with two primary duties: (1) it is the ethics advisory office for Ohio's legislative branch of government; and (2) it is in charge of overseeing lobbyists' compliance with all state level lobbying regulations.

Lobbyists and employers of lobbyists must file lobbying Activity & Expenditure Reports with the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee/Office of the Legislative Inspector General three times annually. Lobbying registrations and reports are available for public review and searches through the JLEC/OLIG Ohio Lobbying Activity Center database. On June 7, 2017, the OLIG identified over \$55,000 in unreported lobbying expenditures for the January – April 2017 reporting period. Knowingly failing to file an Activity & Expenditure Report is a misdemeanor of the fourth degree. OLIG was created by executive order in 1988. In 1990, the General Assembly approved legislation making OLIG permanent.

Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review

The Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) is a joint legislative committee comprising five state senators and five state representatives. JCARR's primary function is to review proposed new, amended, and rescinded rules from over 110 agencies to ensure they do not exceed their rule-making authority granted to them by the General Assembly. The JCARR committee could make a recommendation to invalidate a rule if:

1. The rule exceeds the agency's statutory authority
2. The rule conflicts with an existing rule of that agency or another state agency
3. The rule conflicts with legislative intent
4. The rule-making agency failed to prepare a complete and accurate rule summary and fiscal analysis of the proposed rule, amendment, or rescission (ORC 127.18)
5. The rule-making agency failed to meet the incorporation by reference standards for a text or other material as stated in ORC sections 121.72, 121.75, or 121.76
6. The rule-making agency failed to demonstrate through the business impact analysis (BIA), the Common Sense Initiative Office (CSI) recommendations and the agency's memorandum of response to the CSI recommendations, that the rule's regulatory intent justifies an adverse impact on business

7. The rule is deemed to be in conflict with the Ohio or U.S. Constitution

Legislative Information Office

The Legislative Information Office was created by the General Assembly in 1973 to assist the public in contacting legislators and obtaining basic legislative information. The office provides information about the status of bills, the schedule of legislative committee hearings, Ohio House agendas and Ohio Senate calendars; assists callers with locating documents and other information available on the legislative website. The office also takes messages for legislators and, if callers do not know their elected officials, will refer them to their legislators. Calls are answered Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The telephone number for Columbus-area callers is (614) 466-8842; callers from other areas of Ohio may call toll-free, 1-800-282-0253.

Controlling Board

The Controlling Board provides legislative oversight over certain capital and operating expenditures by state agencies and has approval authority over various other state fiscal activities including:

- Waivers of competitive selection to agencies when an agency's purchases or leases from a specific vendor exceed the amounts specified in law
- Appropriation releases for capital construction projects
- Loans and grants made through the Department of Development
- Loans and subsidies made through the Department of Education to local school districts
- The transfer of appropriation authority between line items within a fund in an agency and increases in appropriation authority in some funds

The Board consists of seven members: the Director of Budget and Management, or designee (the President of the Board), the Chair of the Finance and Appropriations Committee of the House of Representatives, the Chair of the Finance Committee of the Senate, two members of the House appointed by the Speaker of the House, one from the majority party and one from the minority party, two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, one from the majority party and one from the minority party.

Broadcast Educational Media Commission

The Broadcast Educational Media Commission (BEMC) is an independent agency created to supply public educational broadcasting services, including educational television and radio and radio reading services. The commission consists of fifteen members, eleven of whom are voting members. Nine of the voting members are representatives of the public, three appointed by the governor, three appointed by the house speaker, and three appointed by the senate president. The superintendent of public instruction and the chancellor of the Ohio board of regents are ex

officio voting members. Of the nonvoting members, two are members of the house appointed by the house speaker and two are members of the senate appointed by the senate president.

BEMC's fiber optic backbone distributes the Ohio Channel broadcast signal to local public television stations throughout the state which, in turn, broadcast the signal over the airwaves from broadcast towers. Using live Statehouse and Supreme Court programming supplied by Ohio Government Telecommunications, the Ohio Channel provides coverage of state government issues. From the Statehouse Media Center, the signal is recorded and delivered digitally to BEMC, the central hub for the Ohio Channel's underlying infrastructure.

The Statehouse News Bureau is funded through BEMC and provides coverage of legislation, elections, issues and other activities surrounding the Statehouse to Ohio's public radio and television stations. The Bureau remains the only broadcast outlet dedicated to in-depth coverage of state government news and topics of statewide interest.

Special Committees of the Legislature

In addition to the committees specific to the individual branches of the General Assembly, there are specialized committees created by statute, consisting of members from both the House and the Senate:

Joint Education Oversight Committee	jeoc.ohio.gov
Correctional Institution Inspection Committee	www.ciic.state.oh.us
Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee	www.jmoc.state.oh.us
Ohio Criminal Justice Recodification Committee	ocjrc.legislature.ohio.gov
Sunset Review Committee	sunset.legislature.ohio.gov
Ohio Constitutional Modernization Committee	http://www.ocmc.ohio.gov/ ocmc/home
Tax Expenditure Review Committee	http://www.ohiosenate.gov/committees/ tax-expenditure-review

Standing Committees

of the Senate <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/committees/senate-committees>
of the House <http://www.ohiohouse.gov/committee/standing-committees>

The Judiciary

The Ohio Constitution guarantees to all citizens certain basic rights. In the pursuit of these rights, disputes may arise — between individuals, between a person and the government, or between agencies of government. The judicial branch, or court system, is the arm of the government that provides a means to settle these disputes. The judiciary interprets the laws set forth by the Ohio Constitution or those enacted by the legislature. It is independent of both the executive and legislative branches in order to protect the legal rights of the people and guarantee equal protection under the law for everyone.

The Ohio Constitution established three courts to administer judicial powers: the Ohio Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, and the Court of Common Pleas. These three courts cannot be abolished except through amendment of the Ohio Constitution. In addition to these constitutional courts, the Ohio Constitution allows the legislature to create other courts to assist the Court of Common Pleas. These are called statutory courts because they can be created or abolished by the legislature. The legislature has established municipal courts, county courts, mayor’s courts, and the Ohio Court of Claims.

Voting for Judges in Ohio

To avoid the possibility that voters will elect candidates based on promises made about specific court cases, judicial candidates must remain nonpartisan after the primary election campaign and should at all times refrain from making comments that might indicate how they would rule on certain issues. This rule is spelled out in the Judicial Canons:

“Canon 7 – Judges and Judicial candidates should refrain from political activity inappropriate to judicial office . . . [and] . . . should not make pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office; make statements that commit or appear to commit the judge or judicial candidate with respect to cases or controversies that are likely to come before the court; or misrepresent his or her identity, qualifications, present position, or other fact....”

Courts are charged with settling disputes rather than mediating between parties. As such, Ohio statute does not prescribe mediation courts. Mediation is a voluntary process involving a neutral third party, called a mediator, who assists adversaries such as those in a civil lawsuit in resolving a complaint in a manner acceptable to both parties. Various courts in Ohio may have mediation programs, just as some have drug courts. But these programs exist only within the jurisdiction of the court that created them and have no statutory powers.

Ohio's court procedures are based on the adversary system. Opposing sides in a dispute have the opportunity to present their arguments before a court of law. Two types of cases come before the courts: civil and criminal. Civil cases involve debts, contracts, property rights, and other matters not defined as criminal. Criminal cases are classified as either felonies or misdemeanors. Felonies are more serious crimes, and include, for example, murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, and burglary. Misdemeanor cases are more minor offenses and include most traffic violations. A court may have either original jurisdiction (beginning of a case through to a decision) or appellate jurisdiction (review of a lower court's decision), or it may have both jurisdictions in different cases.

Ohio's constitutional courts and the statutory courts, with the exception of mayor's courts, are courts of record. This means that the proceedings of these courts are kept as a perpetual record of what has taken place in each court, including the process, pleadings, reports, verdicts, transcripts, orders, and judgments. Appeals are based on the records kept by the courts.

Justices on the Ohio Supreme Court and judges on the appeals, common pleas, municipal and county courts are elected to six-year terms. Candidates must be admitted to practice law in Ohio and have at least six years' experience practicing in the state. In lieu of six year's practice here, candidates for the Ohio Supreme Court qualify if they have served six years as a judge in any state.

Candidates for these courts, with two exceptions, are nominated in party primaries or file nominating petitions as independent candidates but run in the general election on a nonpartisan ballot. In some cities, city charters establish different procedures for municipal court candidates. Candidates for county courts are nominated by petition only. Supreme Court justices are elected on a statewide ballot; judges are elected by voters within the boundaries of their courts' jurisdiction. When vacancies occur between elections, the governor appoints new judges to fill the open seats.

Constitutional Courts

THE SUPREME COURT

The Ohio Supreme Court is composed of a chief justice and six justices; the number of justices can be changed by statute. The court's primary concern is with cases that consider a substantial constitutional question. The Ohio Supreme Court is the court of final judicial review in the state. It must accept appeals of cases that originated in the courts of appeals; cases involving the death penalty; cases involving questions arising under the U.S. Constitution or the Ohio Constitution; and cases in which there have been conflicting opinions from two or more courts of appeals. It also must accept appeals from administrative bodies, including the Board of Tax Appeals and the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio. The court also has original jurisdiction to issue extraordinary writs, such as writs of habeas corpus, which is an order to bring a person before the court to determine if he or she is being illegally imprisoned or detained, or writ of mandamus, which orders a public official to perform a required duty that he or she has refused or neglected to fulfill.

The Ohio Supreme Court acts as a check on the legislative and executive branches through its review of the constitutionality of laws and its review of actions of executive agencies. It provides uniformity in the application of the laws of the state through its review process and is the final authority in the state on matters of law. The chief justice of the Ohio Supreme Court exercises general supervision over all courts, according to rules set by the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court prepares rules governing practice and procedure in all Ohio's courts. Rules filed with the clerk of each house of the General Assembly by Jan. 15 take effect July 1 the same year, unless both houses adopt a concurrent resolution of disapproval. After adoption of a rule, all laws in conflict with it are nullified. Rules of civil, criminal, appellate, and juvenile procedure have been adopted in this manner, as well as evidence rules. Lower courts may adopt additional rules concerning local practice, providing they are consistent with the statewide rules prepared by the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court also adopts administrative rules that apply to all courts. These rules of superintendence deal with assignment of judges, disqualification of judges, uniform record keeping, admission to the practice of law, and discipline of persons practicing law in the state. Rules of superintendence are effective immediately upon adoption by the Supreme Court. Only rules of practice and procedure are subject to legislative review.

The Supreme Court administers the Client Security Fund. Established in 1985, it is a fund for reimbursing clients for losses due to theft or fraud by their lawyers. The Client Security Fund is funded by a portion of the attorney registration fees assessed to each practicing attorney and judge in Ohio every two years.

The Supreme Court meets in Columbus year-round. Voters choose two justices during the general election in even-numbered years. In the year when the chief justice runs, voters choose the chief justice from among candidates for the position and two justices from among the candidates for regular seats on the court.

COURT OF APPEALS

The courts of appeals have original jurisdiction in certain specified cases, such as mandamus (when a person petitions the court to order a public official to perform a required act) or habeas corpus (a petition asking the court to determine if a defendant is unlawfully imprisoned or detained). But the primary responsibility of courts of appeals is to hear appeals from the common pleas, county, and municipal courts. They review orders and actions of administrative officers or agencies through an appeal from the common pleas court. Cases are heard and decided by a panel of three appellate judges.

Ohio is divided into 12 appellate districts. Each district is served by a court of appeals that can sit in any county in that district, if circumstances warrant it. The court districts vary in size depending on population and workload. Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton counties are single-county districts. The 10th District Court of Appeals in Franklin County also hears appeals from the Ohio Court of Claims.

The number of judges in an appellate district depends on caseload and district size, but the minimum is three judges per district. The legislature may add judges to any district when an increase in caseload requires more jurists. In districts with more than three judges, any three may act as a court of appeals panel. As of 2018, there are 69 Ohio Court of Appeals judges.

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

The constitution provides for a court of common pleas to serve each of the 88 counties in the state. The general division of courts of common pleas have original jurisdiction in felonies and in civil cases where the amount in dispute is greater than \$500. Common pleas courts also have appellate jurisdiction over some state administrative agencies, such as the Unemployment Compensation Review Commission, Ohio Liquor Control Commission and state licensing boards. The number of judges on each common pleas court varies according to county population.

Three specialized divisions of the court of common pleas have been established to decide cases involving probate, domestic, and juvenile matters. In some counties, judges have authority over two or more divisions.

Probate courts have jurisdiction over the probate of wills and supervise the administration of estates and guardianships. They are responsible for overseeing adoption proceedings, issuing marriage licenses, and ruling on cases involving questions of mental competency or physical disability. Probate judges are allowed to perform marriages as well.

Ohio Court of Appeals Districts



Source: Ohio Secretary of State's Office, https://www.sos.state.oh.us/globaiassets/publications/maps/2012-2022/appeals_2012-2020_districtmap.pdf

Courts of domestic relations handle divorce, dissolution of marriage, spousal support, annulment, separation, and allocation of parental rights and responsibilities for the care of children. Each court works in conjunction with a local child support enforcement agency to establish and enforce child support orders.

Juvenile courts hear cases involving people under 18 years of age who have been charged with acts that would be crimes if committed by an adult. Special rules govern procedures in juvenile courts, of which the most noteworthy are that the accused does not have the right to a jury trial and juvenile records can be sealed or expunged. There are also separate rules for traffic cases. Young children and most teens charged with criminal acts remain under the jurisdiction of juvenile courts but if a juvenile court finds that an individual charged with committing a felony while age 14 to 17 is not amenable to rehabilitation in the juvenile system, the judge may transfer, or bind over, the teen to be tried in adult court.

The juvenile court has authority in cases involving unruly, dependent, or neglected children. Juvenile courts have jurisdiction in adult cases that involve matters of paternity, child abuse, nonsupport, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, or failure to send children to school.

All Courts

To reduce the wait for trial, both parties in a civil suit may agree to have a retired judge hear their case. The chief justice of the Ohio Supreme Court then assigns the cases. Judges who retired in good standing from any court may accept cases, regardless of whether the assigned case is in the court of common pleas, a municipal court or the court of claims.

Every judge must file monthly and annual reports with the chief justice covering the number of cases assigned, those pending, and those terminated. Within each county, the administrative judge of each court division reviews the reports of all judges in the division. Judges cannot be forced to manage and dispose of the same number of cases. The reports are public documents and provide one way to gauge the efficiency of each judge.

Judges in all courts rely on statutes, case law, local court rules, Ohio rules of criminal and civil procedure, and the Ohio Rules of Superintendence to manage and make decisions in civil and criminal cases.

Statutory Courts

MUNICIPAL COURTS

Municipal courts are courts of record with preliminary hearing jurisdiction in felony cases and original jurisdiction in traffic and criminal misdemeanor cases committed within the court's jurisdictional territory. The court also hears civil cases in which the amount in dispute does not exceed \$15,000. Municipal courts may establish small claims divisions that handle civil cases in which the dollar amount

does not exceed \$3,000.

State law establishes the territorial jurisdiction for each municipal court in Ohio; many have county-wide jurisdiction. The Ohio Supreme Court established standard uniform rules for superintendence of municipal courts, similar to those for common pleas courts, in 1975.

COUNTY COURTS

County courts were established in 1957 for counties where municipal courts do not have county-wide jurisdiction. They can have territorial jurisdiction in all areas of the county not served by municipal courts. They are courts of record and exercise the same civil and criminal jurisdiction as municipal courts. All county court judges are part-time.

MAYOR'S COURTS

Mayor's courts handle misdemeanors and traffic violations in communities with no municipal court of record. Mayors of municipal corporations not served by a municipal court but populated by more than 100 people may hear only cases involving violations of local ordinances and state traffic laws.

Mayor's courts are not courts of record but must file statistics quarterly and annually with the Supreme Court. Additionally, at the request of the General Assembly, the Supreme Court has adopted rules providing for court procedures and basic legal education for mayors. Mayors whose courts hear alcohol- and drug-related traffic offenses must fulfill additional requirements.

A mayor is not required to be a lawyer but may appoint an attorney who has engaged in the practice of law for at least three years to hear cases in mayor's court.

A person convicted in a mayor's court may appeal the conviction to the municipal court or county court that has jurisdiction within the municipal corporation.

COURT OF CLAIMS

The Court of Claims has statewide original jurisdiction in all civil actions against the state of Ohio and its agencies. Cases may include matters involving personal

In the Minority

Ohio and Louisiana are the only two states that allow the mayors of municipal corporations to preside over courts. Mayor's courts are controversial entities, and there have been outspoken Ohio Supreme Court Justices who have debated over whether they should continue to operate. Proponents tout the convenience of mayor's courts as a way to alleviate minor offenses from Common Pleas dockets. Opponents believe it is problematic to have inexperienced non-attorneys run courts, and see the focus of these courts as collecting revenue rather than protecting residents.

injury, property damage, discrimination, or wrongful imprisonment actions. Established by the General Assembly in 1976, the court sits in Franklin County, but the chief justice may order the court to sit in any county to hear a case if circumstances warrant it. Incumbent and retired judges temporarily assigned by the chief justice of the Ohio Supreme Court sit on the Court of Claims.

Civil actions brought before the Court of Claims are decided by one of two methods. Actions of less than \$2,500 are decided administratively by the clerk or deputy clerk. Actions of more than \$2,500 are decided by a single judge or, in the case of a complex law, by a three-judge panel. Juries are not used in deciding cases that come before the Court of Claims.

In 1976 the Ohio Victims of Crime Compensation Program was established, to be administered by the Court of Claims under the guidance of Ohio's chief justice. The purpose of the program is to grant compensation to a person injured or dependents of those killed during a crime or while preventing a crime, apprehending a criminal, or assisting a police officer. Victims of drunk drivers became eligible for compensation in 1989.

Victims or dependents of deceased victims may receive compensation for certain crime-related expenses, including medical and rehabilitation expenses, payment for lost wages, psychological counseling, funeral expenses, and the cost of services the victim normally would perform but now must pay someone else to perform. The maximum compensation is \$50,000 per victim per incident. The program is funded by extra charges on court costs collected from felony and misdemeanor convictions and pleas (excluding non-moving traffic violations) as well as on the reinstatement of a driver's license pursuant to a drunk driving conviction.

Applications for compensation are available from the Court of Claims, all county common pleas courts, and most law enforcement agencies. After the Court of Claims receives the application, the Ohio Attorney General's Office investigates it and recommends the court approve or deny compensation. If an individual disagrees with the attorney general's decision, he or she may appeal it to the Court of Claims within 30 days. The court will then hear the claim and make a final determination.

The Court of Claims also hears challenges by individuals, organizations and the media who believe that state agencies are withholding public records, in violation of Ohio's Public Records Act, often called the sunshine law. More about these challenges can be found on page 121.

The Jury System

For adults, "In any trial, in any court, the party accused shall be allowed . . . to have . . . a speedy public trial by an impartial jury of the county in which the offense is alleged to have been committed." Section 10, Article 1 of the Ohio Constitution guarantees the right to trial by jury. Trials are first held in courts of original jurisdic-

tion (common pleas, municipal, or county courts). Two types of juries are used in the Ohio court system, the grand jury and the petit (pronounced *PET-it*) jury.

In most cases, a grand jury hears evidence from the prosecution before a suspect is arrested and decides whether the accused should be indicted. Jurors may ask questions and for additional evidence before making a decision. A grand jury does not make final judgment of guilt, and its proceedings are secret, without the accused present. The prosecutor's role is to present cases, question witnesses, and make recommendations. The prosecutor does not hear the jury's deliberations. The grand jury is composed of 15 members selected at random either from the registered voters in the county or from a list of licensed drivers. At least 12 members must concur in order to bring an indictment.

A petit jury is used in both criminal and civil cases and is the jury system most commonly associated with a trial. In criminal cases, the jury determines if the accused is guilty or not; in civil cases, it determines liability. The opposing parties present evidence and the jury decides the verdict based on the evidence and the instructions from the judge about the law of the case. Criminal defendants are presumed innocent unless shown to be guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. In civil cases, a lesser threshold must be met, with liability assigned using what is known as a preponderance, or majority, of the evidence. The number of petit jurors depends on the case.

Juries hearing criminal cases are composed of 12 members for felonies and eight members for misdemeanors. The verdict must be unanimous. Eight-member juries hear civil cases unless both parties agree to a lesser number. At least two-thirds of the members must concur to render a verdict in a civil case.

Sentencing

Sentencing laws are established to punish offenders and to protect the public. The state uses both incarceration and rehabilitation to pursue these goals. In the late 1980s, Ohio faced a growing prison population, resulting in crowded facilities and fewer resources. To address this concern, the Ohio General Assembly established the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission in 1990 to restructure Ohio's sentencing laws. Felony sentencing laws adopted in 1996 lengthened prison terms judges imposed on many violent offenders and steered more nonviolent offenders to participate in local rehabilitation facilities.

In 2011, a new Ohio sentencing reform bill was passed, with the renewed goal of easing prison overcrowding and saving the state money. The act generally requires judges to sentence nonviolent fourth- and fifth-degree felony offenders to alternative facilities such as community based correctional facilities and halfway houses, rather than prison. It also allows for the release of nonviolent offenders who did not commit a sexually oriented offense if they have served more than 80 percent of a prison term of one year or more. It provides an alternative to prison for felony

offenses for failure to pay child or spousal support and eliminates the distinction between criminal penalties for drug offenses, such as the unequal penalties for possession of crack cocaine versus possession of powdered cocaine. The act also instituted an earned credit system allowing certain prisoners to earn time off of their sentence by completing education and rehabilitation programs.

Penalties for the most serious offenses include life in prison or death. Juries in death penalty cases recommend death or a lesser sentence but, as in all cases, a judge or judges makes final sentencing decisions. State prison terms are mandatory for murderers, rapists, higher-level drug offenders, and those who use firearms or repeat serious offenses. Prison terms are presumed for other serious offenses. Judges may also impose fines and order supervision after the offender's release from prison.

For less serious felonies and most misdemeanors, trial judges have more discretion in imposing a sentence that is appropriate to the crime and circumstances of the case. This spectrum of options includes state prison (for felons only), terms in community-based facilities, fines, house arrest, community service, drug and alcohol use monitoring, supervision by community officials and curfew. These options are designed to shift some of the burden of dealing with nonviolent offenders from state prisons to community programs. State funding is provided to administer these programs, which are generally cheaper than housing an offender in a state prison or local jail.

Minor misdemeanors are the least serious and most commonly committed offenses. Most traffic infractions (at least on first offense) fall under this category. No prison or jail term is imposed for minor misdemeanors. While the court typically imposes a fine for these offenses, since January 2004, judges have the option to require a defendant to work hours of community service and even pay restitution if the victim suffers property damage.

The criminal sentencing commission, created under the Ohio Revised Code, is charged with enhancing justice and ensuring fair sentencing in the state. The chief justice of the Ohio Supreme Court chairs the 31-member commission. The chair nominates ten members of the commission, including one judge from the Court of Appeals, three municipal or county judges, and three common pleas judges. The governor appoints 12 members, including a county, juvenile, and municipal prosecutor; two defense attorneys; an Ohio State Bar Association representative; a sheriff; two police chiefs; a crime victim; a county commissioner; and a mayor. Four members of the General Assembly serve on the commission as well, two from each party and two from each house. Furthermore, the state public defender, the director of the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, the director of the Department of Youth Services, and the superintendent of the Highway Patrol are members of the commission.

Board of Professional Conduct

The Board of Professional Conduct helps regulate the legal profession in Ohio. When Ohio lawyers or judges are charged with ethical misconduct, the board holds hearings and makes findings and recommendations to the Supreme Court, or, alternatively, monitors and assists bar association certified grievance committees to do the same. The board also holds hearings involving lawyers or judges suspected of being impaired by alcohol or drug use or from mental, emotional or physical issues during performance of their duties. Further, it also holds hearings on reinstatement of lawyers suspended from practice. In all cases, the board makes recommendations but the Ohio Supreme Court decides whether to impose sanctions, take no action or reinstate lawyers and judges. In addition, the board issues advisory opinions on ethical issues affecting lawyers and judges statewide, directly advises judges and lawyers on ethics compliance, and serves as the statewide ethics agency for judges and magistrates. The Supreme Court appoints the board's members — seventeen attorneys, seven active or retired judges, and four non-attorneys — to three-year terms.

Ohio Judicial Conference

The Ohio Judicial Conference is an agency in the judicial branch of government that works with Ohio judges to improve the administration of justice. Through the Judicial Conference, judges provide the General Assembly with analyses of the judicial impact of proposed legislation and with other information that is important to the legislative process.

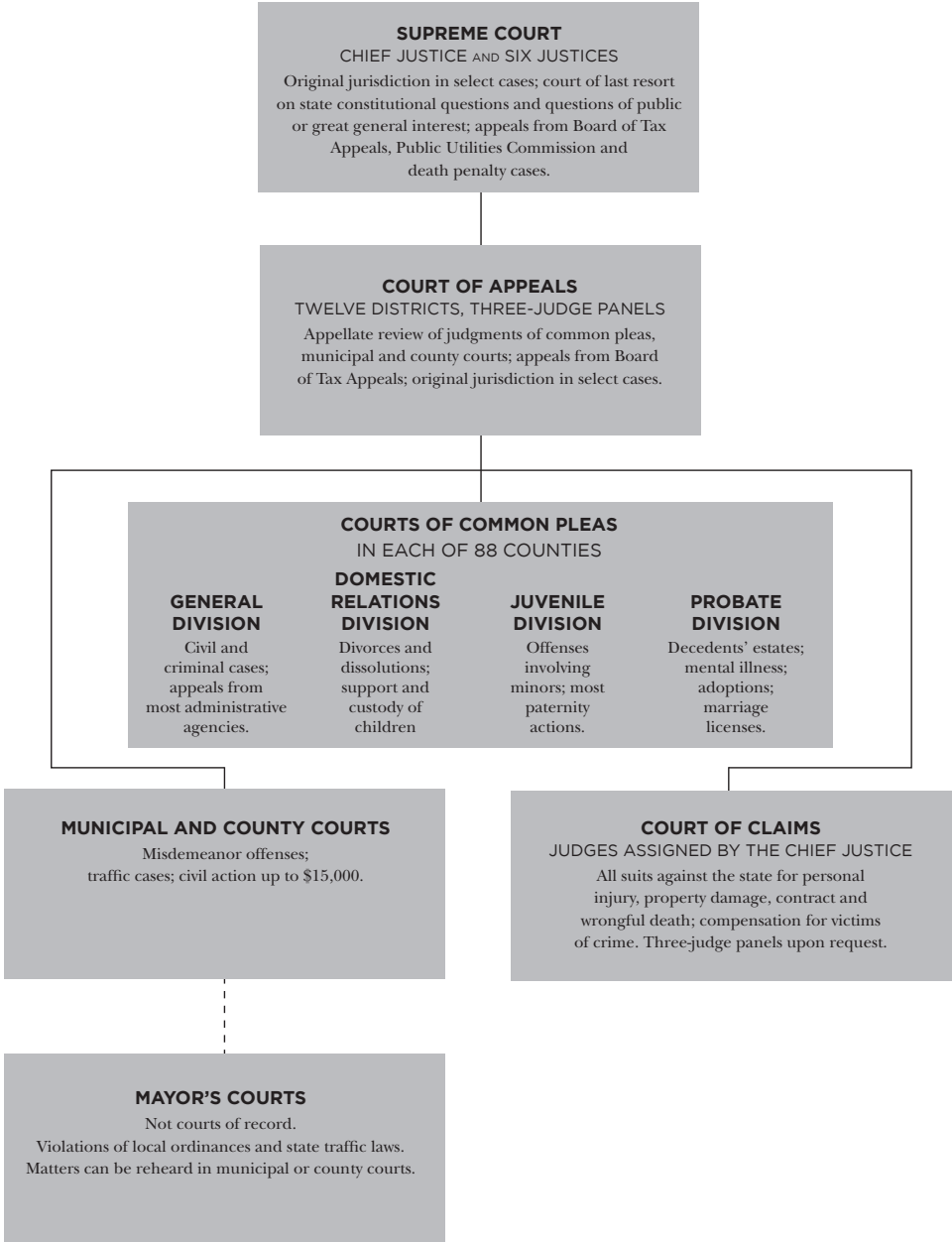
All Ohio judges are members of the Judicial Conference, and many serve on conference committees dealing with issues of concern to the judiciary. For example, committees recommend improvements to jury service, inform judges about developments in court technology and help judges develop programs to educate the public about how Ohio's judicial system functions.

Six judges serve as officers of the Judicial Conference and guide the work of an executive director and professional staff. The Judicial Conference offices are located in the Ohio Judicial Center in Columbus.

Board of Bar Examiners

The Board of Bar Examiners prepares and conducts examinations of applicants for admission to practice law in Ohio. The Ohio Supreme Court appoints the 18 members.

The Ohio Court System



Source: *The Ohio Supreme Court*,
<http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/SCO/jurisdiction/structure.pdf>

The Executive *Elected Officials*

The executive branch of Ohio's state government consists of six elected officials: the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, auditor of state, and treasurer of state. All are elected to serve four-year terms, with the governor and lieutenant governor elected on a single ballot as a team. All are limited by the Ohio Constitution to two consecutive terms but may run again after four years out of that office. Elections are held in even-numbered years (2018, 2022, etc.) between presidential elections. In addition to these six offices, the executive branch includes the departments or agencies responsible for administering state policy in major areas such as finance, transportation, health, human services, and natural resources. These departments and agencies are established by law and may be abolished or altered legislatively. Additional boards and commissions have been established for specific purposes and made part of the executive branch.

Governor

The governor is the head of the executive branch of state government. It is the governor's responsibility to ensure that all laws are faithfully executed; report the condition of the state to the legislature at each session of the General Assembly; recommend new laws to each session; and, in odd-numbered years, prepare and present a proposed state budget for the next biennium. The governor also is the commander-in-chief of the Ohio National Guard.

The governor plays an important role in legislative matters. He or she has more than one way to enable or prevent a bill from becoming law, as explained on page 18. The governor is responsible for coordinating all of the agencies in the state's executive branch and supervising state programs.

Through the power of appointment, the governor exercises wide executive authority beyond that expressly granted in the Ohio Constitution. With the consent of the Senate, the governor appoints the directors of all administrative departments except the Department of Education. Further, the governor appoints many of the heads of divisions within departments and members of numerous boards and commissions created by the legislature. The governor can also create new commissions and boards by executive order. Executive orders are rules or orders issued by the governor that carry the force of law. The makeup of the governor's cabinet varies

from administration to administration, but it usually includes the department heads and any others whom the governor may invite to sit with them.

When the U.S. president or other states call for conferences on issues of national or regional importance, the governor represents Ohio and defines the state's position. Conferences may deal with such questions as the control of power-plant emissions, a Midwestern agricultural policy, or economic development.

The Governor's Powers

Compared with other states, Ohio's governor has what are known as a "strong" gubernatorial powers. The strength of such power is determined by a governor's appointment powers and veto powers.

Lieutenant Governor

The lieutenant governor is elected jointly with the governor. As with U.S. president and vice president, a single vote is cast for both candidates in the general election.

The lieutenant governor is a member of the governor's cabinet, serves as chief liaison to county and local governments, and has other executive duties as assigned by the governor or as provided by law. The lieutenant governor may be appointed as a department head or as the governor's representative on various boards or commissions.

If the governor dies, resigns, is convicted on impeachment, is removed or suffers a disability that prevents fulfillment of the duties of the office, the lieutenant governor succeeds to the office of governor. In case of disability, the lieutenant governor serves as governor until the disability ends, as determined by the Supreme Court of Ohio. The gubernatorial line of succession extends from lieutenant governor to president of the Senate to speaker of the House of Representatives.

A constitutional amendment passed in 1989 provides that, in the case of a vacancy in the office of lieutenant governor, the governor nominates a lieutenant governor, who will take office upon confirmation by both houses of the General Assembly.

Attorney General

The attorney general is the chief legal officer of the state and represents Ohio in all cases in which the state is a party or has a significant interest. The attorney general's office provides legal counsel to all elected state officials, state departments, commissions, and the General Assembly. Most often, this representation is provided through the assignment of an assistant attorney general to work on a regular basis with a given agency. The attorney general is also responsible for the collection of debts owed to the state.

The attorney general provides formal and informal opinions on Ohio law in response to requests from elected state officials, the General Assembly, the heads of state departments and agencies, and the 88 county prosecutors. In addition, the attorney general's office enforces Ohio's laws dealing with consumer protection, antitrust, environmental protection, nursing home patient abuse and neglect, organized crime, and charitable foundations. The attorney general provides direct assistance to Ohio's local law enforcement agencies through the Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Upon request by law enforcement, the bureau provides investigative services including scientific analysis of crime scenes and evidence.

The Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission, a nine-member board to advise the attorney general, is appointed by the governor with advice and consent of the Senate. It establishes uniform courses of law enforcement training for sheriff and police departments and other peace officers throughout Ohio. It also supervises the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy.

The attorney general serves as a member of the State Sinking Fund Commission, which administers the sale and redemption of voter-authorized bonds, and the State Board of Deposit.

Auditor of State

The auditor of state is the chief accounting officer for the state of Ohio and is responsible for auditing all public offices in Ohio, including cities and villages, counties and townships, schools and universities, as well as the many departments, agencies, and commissions of state government, at least every two fiscal years. The office conducts special audits to investigate fraud, waste, and abuse.

The Financial Audit Group conducts financial audits of all public entities as required under Ohio law. The Local Government Services Section serves as a consulting and fiscal advisory group to all governmental agencies and subdivisions. It provides assistance with financial forecasts, complying with standards changed under generally accepted accounting principles, annual financial reports, record reconstruction and reconciliation, fiscal watch or emergency assistance, and offers financial management training for elected officials. The Medicaid contract audit section is charged with ensuring Ohio's Medicaid dollars are spent legally by those working under contracts with state agencies.

The Auditor also conducts performance audits of state agencies, and school districts designated to be in fiscal caution, fiscal watch or fiscal emergency due to financial troubles. These audits are designed to identify areas of inefficiency or low effectiveness and recommend corrective action.

In addition to auditing responsibilities, the auditor's office issues checks, called warrants, annually for the state payroll, public assistance payments, and payments to the state's suppliers of goods and services.

The auditor distributes all state subsidies and taxes collected on behalf of local

governments to local political subdivisions. He or she sits on various boards and commissions, including the six public employee retirement systems and the Apportionment Board, and is president of the Sinking Fund Commission.

Secretary of State

The secretary of state is the chief elections officer for Ohio, overseeing the administration of all elections in the state to assure compliance with state and federal laws. Ohio law provides for county boards of elections in each county to carry out the election process under the secretary of state's direction. The secretary of state supervises the administration of election laws; reviews statewide initiative and referendum petitions; chairs the Ohio Ballot Board, which approves ballot language for statewide issues; canvasses votes for all elective state offices and issues; investigates election fraud and irregularities; trains election officials, and works with counties to train poll workers.

The Elections Division of the secretary of state's office also compiles and maintains election statistics and other election-related records. Statewide candidates, state political action committees (PACs), state political parties and legislative caucus campaign committees file reports on their campaign fundraising and spending with the office.

The secretary of state is a member of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, which meets every 10 years following the decennial census. The seven-member board redraws boundaries for each of the 99 Ohio House and 33 Ohio Senate districts to reflect population changes. The commission's procedures are detailed on page 10.

The Business Services Division receives and approves articles of incorporation for Ohio business entities and grants licenses to out-of-state corporations seeking to do business in Ohio. Limited partnerships and limited liability companies also file with the Secretary of State's office.

The Corporations Section of the Business Services Division approves amendments to filed documents, mergers, consolidations and dissolutions; and registers trademarks, trade names, service marks and fictitious names, the legal term for the name of a business that's different from the owner or incorporator of the business. This section also approves and keeps a registry of business names, names and addresses of statutory agents, incorporators' names, corporations' charter numbers, dates of incorporation, and the number of authorized stock shares per corporation.

License to Marry

The Secretary of State's office licenses ministers for the purpose of performing marriage ceremonies in Ohio. Licenses are issued to any ordained or licensed minister of any religious society or congregation requesting the license.

Lenders and other secured parties file financing statements in the Uniform Commercial Code section of the Business Services Division to claim an interest in collateral used for a loan and to have the claim indexed for public notice.

The secretary of state is the official custodian of all laws passed by the General Assembly and of the journals of both houses. All state departments and agencies must file their administrative rules and regulations with the office.

Treasurer of State

The treasurer of state serves as the state's banker and chief fiscal officer. If the Ohio treasury were a bank, it would be the largest in the state. Its holdings include both cash and investments held for state and custodial funds. Overall, the treasurer's main duties are to collect, invest, and protect state funds.

Among the most important functions of the Ohio treasurer are collecting and processing billions of dollars of taxpayers' money each year. The treasurer does not levy taxes and is not responsible for the administration or enforcement of tax laws.

The treasurer's office collects and processes most state taxes, licenses, and fees. The Ohio Department of Taxation collects the personal income tax, horse racing tax, motor vehicle sales tax and, with the Department of Commerce, liquor taxes. The departments deposit the taxes into the Ohio treasury.

The treasurer also acts as protector of state and custodial funds, which include investment assets of the five public pension systems: Public Employees Retirement System, State Teachers Retirement System, School Employees Retirement System, Police and Firemen Disability and Pension Funds, and the Ohio Highway Patrol Retirement System as well as the Industrial Commission and various other custodial accounts.

In addition, the treasurer manages a public funds investment pool for local government subdivisions. The State Treasury Asset Reserve (STAR Ohio) offers participating school districts, cities, counties, or other local governments an investment alternative that has historically proven profitable and dependable.

Among his or her obligations, the treasurer serves on other state boards and commissions and is the statutory chair of the three-member State Board of Deposit. Other members are the attorney general and auditor. The treasurer is a member of the Sinking Fund Commission and is a member and ex-officio treasurer of the Ohio Public Facilities Commission. The latter commission administers bond programs funding capital improvements for higher education, mental health and park facilities.

Only the treasurer can issue bonds for Ohio's voter-authorized Infrastructure Improvements Program, which makes monies available to local governments to fund projects to improve roads, bridges, and other infrastructure activities. The treasurer also issues bonds for the Ohio School Facilities Commission, which provides funding for the construction or renovation of school buildings.

The Executive

State Government Departments

Within the executive branch, 24 administrative departments are largely responsible for carrying out the laws enacted by the Ohio General Assembly. In the order listed in this chapter, they are:

- the Adjutant General's Department
- the departments of Administrative Services, Aging and Agriculture
- the Office of Budget and Management
- the Department of Commerce
- the Development Services Agency
- the departments of Developmental Disabilities and Education
- the Environmental Protection Agency
- the departments of Health, Higher Education, Insurance, and Job and Family Services
- the departments of Medicaid, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Natural Resources, Public Safety, Rehabilitation and Correction, Taxation, Transportation and Veterans Services
- the Bureau of Workers' Compensation
- the Department of Youth Services

The governor appoints all department heads with the exception of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who is appointed by the State Board of Education to oversee the Department of Education.

While there is no established pattern for the structure of a department, most operate through a number of **divisions** or **bureaus** appropriate to the assigned duties; divisions may be subdivided into *offices, boards, programs* and other designations. Usually division heads are appointed by, and responsible to, the director of the department; in a few cases, the governor has appointment power. The attorney general represents all state departments in the courts.

State agencies adopt rules of procedure for administering state laws and must hold public hearings before their adoption. Major boards and commissions relating to each department are typically included in the descriptions of departments.

Adjutant General's Department

The adjutant general is the military chief of staff to the governor and assists and advises the governor in matters affecting the security of the state and the operation of its military forces. The adjutant general is responsible for supervision of military property owned by the state or issued to it by the federal government. The office also maintains military service records.

The adjutant general is responsible for the operation of the **Ohio National Guard**, made up of both army and air units. As of 2017, the total strength was nearly 16,700 officers and enlisted personnel. Each unit has a deployment priority in U.S. Department of Defense war plans.

The **Ohio Military Reserve** is a military force organized and maintained to provide the state with defense in the event the Ohio National Guard is employed or mobilized.

The governor, as commander-in-chief, may order units of the organized forces to provide aid to local civil authorities and areas when tornadoes, floods or other natural disasters cause significant damage. Through the governor, local civil authorities may request that the Guard come to protect people and property from looting and/or fire. The National Guard can also be employed to suppress riots, insurrection and other civil disturbances.

Department of Administrative Services

The Department of Administrative Services provides centralized services and specialized support to state agencies, boards and commissions, as well as to local governments and state universities.

The **Division of Equal Opportunity** is required to ensure equal opportunity to and fair treatment in government contracting and state employment. The division implements and enforces the state's affirmative action and equal employment opportunity policies and implements and monitors the state's procurement preference programs for minority-owned, women-owned, and socially and economically disadvantaged businesses.

The **General Services Division** performs a variety of functions including procurement, fleet management, insurance, printing, mail services, real estate services, asset management, facilities management, security services and surplus property services.

The **Human Resources Division** is responsible for a variety of functions including overall administration of the state's human resources operations for state employees. This division provides services and information to state employees and assists state agencies in conducting their human resource functions. Services include policy development, payroll administration, benefits administration, classification and compensation, drug testing, central recruiting, training and development, workforce planning and records maintenance.

The *Office of Collective Bargaining* is primarily responsible for developing and directing the state's labor relations policy as well as performing a variety of services in conjunction with labor contract negotiation and administration. Statutorily, the office serves as the principle representative of the State of Ohio as an employer and negotiates all of the state's labor contracts.

The *Office of Information Technology* delivers statewide information technology and telecommunication services to state government agencies, boards and commissions as well as policy and standards development, life cycle investment planning and privacy and security management. The following OIT sections carry out these responsibilities.

The *State Chief Information Officer's* office is responsible for the strategic direction and efficient use of information technology across the state and for oversight of state IT activities.

The **Investment and Governance Division** assists state agencies by providing IT policy and standards as well as investment planning and management, IT procurement and contract management, research and project support services.

The **Infrastructure Services Division** operates the IT infrastructure for the state, which includes hardware, software and telecommunications.

Enterprise Shared Solutions coordinates strategies for delivering government information and services electronically.

The *Office of Information Security and Privacy* works with internal and external agency customers to create, implement and manage enterprise efforts for information assurance, security, privacy and risk management.

The *Ohio 9-1-1 Program Office* coordinates and facilitates communication concerning 9-1-1 issues among state, federal, regional and local 9-1-1 and public safety communications officials.

Department of Aging

The Ohio Department of Aging's mission is to serve and represent 2.5 million Ohioans age 60 and older. The department's role is to advocate for the needs of all older Ohioans, including improving the quality of life for older Ohioans, helping seniors live active, healthy and independent lives, and promoting positive attitudes toward aging and older people. The department provides home- and community-based services, helping frail older adults remain at home when feasible.

The department channels federal and state funds to 12 regional agencies, which in turn contract with local agencies to provide specific services such as home-delivered meals, transportation, home health aides and home repair. It also administers Medicaid waiver programs that allow eligible older adults to receive care in their homes, such as PASSPORT home care and Assisted Living Waiver programs.

One of the most visible programs administered by the department is the Golden Buckeye Card Program for persons 60 years old and older or 18 years old or older who

are totally and permanently disabled. Cardholders receive discounts on products and services from participating merchants statewide. In addition, seniors can use their Golden Buckeye Card for savings on prescriptions at participating pharmacies throughout Ohio. The department has a *Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office* to serve as a mediator and advocate for the rights of older consumers.

Department of Agriculture

The Department of Agriculture enforces state agricultural regulations governing the production, handling, distribution and marketing of agricultural products. It is also responsible for promoting agricultural development and various state-federal programs benefiting Ohio farmers. The department provides consumer protection and regulates the conduct of county and independent fairs.

The **Division of Food Safety** operates an inspection program to protect consumers against unclean, adulterated or mislabeled food, dairy products, beverages, nonprescription drugs and cosmetics. The **Dairy Division** is responsible for ensuring the safety and wholesomeness of all milk products produced in Ohio. The **Meat Inspection Division** is required to verify that meat and poultry products are wholesome, unadulterated, properly labeled and produced in a sanitary environment.

The **Plant Health Division** regulates the processing and sale of fertilizers, feed, pesticides and seeds, and licenses pesticide applicators and dealers who sell restricted-use pesticides. The division inspects honey bee colonies and works to control pests and diseases that injure crops. The division also licenses grain handlers and enforces regulations to protect the grain industry. The **Marketing Division** directs domestic and international marketing programs for agricultural products of the state.

The **Animal Health Division** is responsible for veterinary inspection of livestock and protecting and promoting the health of Ohio's livestock and poultry. The *Livestock Environmental Permitting Program* is charged with ensuring that the state's largest livestock operations follow science-based guidelines that protect the environment while allowing the facility to be productive. It is also responsible for regulating how Ohio's largest livestock and poultry farms handle manure and waste water and manage flies, rodents and other pests.

The **Division of Soil and Water Conservation** provides assistance to Ohio's 88 county programs, implements agricultural and nonpoint source water pollution control programs, supports local development of watershed protection plans, and has a statewide soil information program.

The **Division of Amusement Ride Safety** licenses, inspects, and ensures proper insurance coverage for all temporary and permanent rides in the state of Ohio. The division also conducts re-inspection of rides, investigates accidents, and licenses games at Ohio's numerous county and independent fairs. This is also the division which regulates bungee jumping.

The **Enforcement Division** supports criminal and administrative investigation programs used to determine compliance with federal, state, and local laws in those areas administered by the Department of Agriculture. The **Division of Weights & Measures** works with county and city weights and measures programs to test devices ranging from fuel meters and retail store scanners to vehicle and livestock scales for consistent measuring standards.

The **Consumer Protection Laboratory** conducts laboratory tests of food samples and agricultural commodities as required by all divisions. The **Administration Division** provides support services for the department and maintains a toll-free hotline for consumer questions and complaints about food products, short-weighted packages, package labeling and more.

Additionally, the department administers an *Office of Farmland Preservation* to assist farmland protection efforts. Other programs under the direction of the Department are the Ohio Rural Development Partnership, which addresses the needs of rural Ohio communities; and the Ohio Grape Industries Program, which oversees and implements promotional programs for the grape and wine industries.

Office of Budget and Management

The Office of Budget and Management (OBM) is the staff agency for fiscal matters. It is responsible for preparing the governor's proposed budget and controlling state spending according to law. The director of OBM sits on the governor's cabinet as the governor's chief financial officer.

The office formulates the budget by coordinating budget requests from state agencies with anticipated revenues and with the governor's priorities. OBM then presents the budget to the legislature at the beginning of its first regular session in odd-numbered years. The document serves as the basis for the legislature's fund appropriations for state programs. Staff members monitor legislative budget hearings and provide program and cost information. After the budget passes, the office schedules spending according to the adopted budget and continually reviews and monitors state agencies' programs as part of the budget control process. The OBM also maintains the state's financial records.

Department of Commerce

The Department of Commerce's primary task, managed by its **Division of Financial Institutions**, is to regulate state-chartered financial institutions such as banks, savings and loans, credit unions, brokerage houses and small loan companies.

The division charters depository institutions, licenses non-depository financial services and conducts on-site examinations. The division's *Office of Consumer Affairs* works to provide education to Ohioans regarding borrowing and related financial topics. The department also licenses and monitors various other commercial activities.

The **Division of Industrial Compliance** divides its work into four main areas:

1. **Construction:** The division reviews building plans for the construction and renovation of commercial and public buildings and inspects plumbing, electrical and structural systems.
2. **Mechanical systems:** The division inspects mechanical systems including steam engines and boilers, hydronics, escalators and the lifts inside wind turbine structures.
3. **Maintenance:** The division tests and inspects bedding, upholstered furniture, stuffed toys, ski lifts and roller-skating rinks on-site.
4. **Wage & hour:** The division investigates complaints related to the Ohio minimum wage and the employment of minors.

Additionally, the division provides certification and licensing for numerous skilled trades within Ohio's building industry. The division licenses travel agents/tour promoters as well. To perform this task, the division works with:

- the *Board of Building Standards*, which sets the building code for the state of Ohio and provides training and certification for local building authorities across Ohio
- the *Board of Building Appeals*, which hears requests for variance(s) from the Ohio Building Code
- the *Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board*, tests and licenses regulated commercial construction industry occupations.

The **Division of Liquor Control** regulates the manufacturing, distribution and sale of all alcoholic beverages in Ohio through the issuance of annual permits to the businesses involved in the industry. In some cases, the number of permits issued (also known as licenses) are limited by a quota, based on the population of the area. The division works with local law enforcement and the Department of Public Safety Investigative Unit to enforce Ohio liquor laws.

Profits from spirits help fund Ohio's economic development efforts. The division, on behalf of the nonprofit JobsOhio, is the sole purchaser and distributor of spirituous liquor (liquor containing more than 21 percent alcohol by volume) in Ohio. The Division selects and prices the products and supplies them to authorized agents at no charge. Authorized agents are private businesses such as grocery stores, corner markets and carryouts that contract to sell spirituous liquor and earn a commission on sales.

The **Division of Real Estate and Professional Licensing** licenses Ohio's real estate brokers, salespeople, appraisers and foreign real estate dealers and salespeople. The division is also responsible for registering cemeteries located in Ohio and real estate developments located in other states but marketed in Ohio.

The **Division of Securities** regulates the sale of stocks, bonds, mutual funds, options, commercial paper and other investments in Ohio under the Ohio Securi-

ties Act. The division licenses broker-dealers, securities salespersons, investment advisers, investment adviser representatives and investment officers. The division also registers securities offered for sale to Ohioans. When Ohio securities laws are violated, the division can pursue administrative actions, civil injunctions and criminal referrals.

The **Division of Unclaimed Funds** regulates the safekeeping and return of monies designated as “unclaimed.” Common sources of unclaimed funds include dormant bank accounts, unpaid insurance policies, unreturned utility and rent deposits, uncashed dividends and shares of stock, uncashed checks and forgotten layaway deposits. The Division of Unclaimed Funds has a website where individuals may check for details of unclaimed funds: <https://www.com/ohio.gov/unfd/>

The **Division of State Fire Marshal** enforces the Ohio Fire Code; investigates the cause of fires and explosions; analyzes fire-related criminal evidence; trains firefighters; presents fire-prevention programs; provides fire safety education to business, industry and the general public; and regulates underground storage tanks. It consists of eight bureaus: *Administration*, *Bureau of Underground Storage Tank Regulation (BUSTR)*, *Code Enforcement*, *Fire Prevention*, *Forensic Laboratory*, *Investigation Bureau*, *Ohio Fire Academy*, and *Testing and Regulation*.

The *Video Service Authorization Program* authorizes cable television companies to do business in Ohio, assists consumers with their cable complaints and oversees cable services companies participating in the Emergency Alert System.

The *Medical Marijuana Control Program* requires the Department of Commerce and the Ohio Board of Pharmacy to have a structure in place allowing Ohioans with a qualifying medical condition to obtain a recommendation to buy and consume medical marijuana. The Commerce Department oversees licensed growers, marijuana processors and testing laboratories. The pharmacy board oversees retail dispensaries and registers patients and caregivers. The *State Medical Board of Ohio* is responsible for certifying doctors to recommend medical marijuana.

The *Manufactured Homes Program* regulates and licenses manufactured home communities, licenses installers, dealers, brokers and salespersons and certifies inspectors.

Development Services Agency

The Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA) offers a variety of programs aimed at helping Ohio businesses and communities succeed. The agency provides resources to entrepreneurs and new and established businesses through Small Business Development Centers, Minority Business Development Centers and International Trade Assistance Centers as well as Small and Minority Business Financial Incentives Programs and Ohio Third Frontier. The **Minority Business Development Division** supports the growth and sustainability of small, minority and disadvantaged businesses in Ohio.

Through partnerships with local governments and nonprofit organizations, ODSA provides technical and financial assistance to improve communities throughout the state. The agency can provide support through a Community Development Block Grant, an energy-efficiency evaluation or the Local Government Innovation Fund. Ohioans can access assistance and improve their energy efficiency through programs such as the Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP), Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus (PIPP Plus).

The *Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program* is designed to help minority-owned businesses obtain state government contracts for goods and services. Businesses certified as MBE program participants may compete for 15 percent of state agencies' spending, through a sheltered bidding process.

Companies must apply to the MBE program to become certified. To qualify, at least 51 percent of the company must be owned and controlled by an Ohio resident and U.S. citizen who belongs to one of the following ethnic groups: African-American, Asian, Hispanic or Native American. Before applying for a state contract, the company must have been in business for at least one year and have the knowledge, capability, licenses and permits required for the work it seeks.

Certified members may receive contract assistance, finance and bonding assistance and management and technical assistance.

Department of Developmental Disabilities

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities provides programs, services and support promoting health and safety to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. A developmental disability is a severe, chronic disability attributed to a mental or physical impairment manifested before the age of 22 and is expected to continue indefinitely and result in substantial functional limitations in three or more areas of major life activities. Examples include cerebral palsy, spina bifida and intellectual disability.

The department operates eight residential Developmental Centers located throughout the state. Each center is certified as an Intermediate Care Facility for individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/ID) by the federal Medicaid program, signifying it complies with mandated standards governing care, training and the environment it provides residents.

The department offers a wide range of programs and services in communities through a county board system. County board programs are designed to accommodate people's needs as they grow and age: early intervention (ages 0-2), preschool (ages 3-5), school age (ages 6-21) and adult (21 and up). The boards provide for family resource services, supported home services, case management services, transportation services, community employment services and more.

Department of Education

The Ohio Department of Education oversees the state's public education system, which includes public school districts, joint vocational school districts, charter schools and on-line schools. The department also monitors educational service centers, other regional education providers, early learning and childcare programs and private schools.

The department's tasks include:

- administering the school funding system
- collecting school fiscal and performance data
- developing academic standards and model curricula
- administering the state achievement tests
- issuing district and school report cards
- administering Ohio's voucher programs
- providing professional development
- licensing teachers, administrators, treasurers, superintendents and other education personnel

The department is governed by the State Board of Education. The board consists of 19 members. The governor appoints eight and voters elect the remaining 11. Chairs of the Ohio House and Senate education committees serve as non-voting ex-officio members. Day-to-day administration of the department, however, is the responsibility of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who is hired by the State Board of Education.

The Ohio General Assembly has enacted legislation creating alternatives in the Ohio public education system during the past three decades. Read about them in chapter 10.

Environmental Protection Agency

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA or OEPA) administers state and federal laws regulating clean air and water, solid waste disposal, hazardous materials management, drinking water safety and cleanup of contamination caused by emergencies or long-term practices.

The **Division of Air Pollution Control** reviews, issues and enforces permits for installation and operation of sources of air pollution and operates an extensive outdoor monitoring network. The division also oversees an automobile emission testing program to reduce emissions from mobile sources.

The **Division of Drinking and Ground Waters** is charged with ensuring compliance with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and evaluates potential threats to source waters that supply more than 5,000 public drinking water systems in Ohio. The division takes a lead role in protecting groundwater statewide — in cooperation with other state and federal agencies. It implements a groundwater quality monitoring program and provides technical support to the agency's waste management

State Board of Education Districts



Source: Ohio Secretary of State's Office, https://www.sos.state.oh.us/globaiassets/publications/maps/2012-2022/ohioschoolboard_2012-2020_districtmap.pdf

divisions.

The *Office of Environmental Education* administers the Ohio Environmental Education Fund, awarding up to \$1 million in grants annually for educational projects targeting preschool through university students and teachers, the general public and the regulated community. The office also administers the Ohio Clean Diesel School Bus grant program, Diesel Emission Reduction Grants, and a scholarship program for university students in environmental science and engineering. In addition, the office administers Volkswagen Mitigation Grants, from the \$75 million settlement with the automaker.

The **Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance** offers programs that support community development and compliance with pollution-control laws. The *Office of Financial Assistance* provides technical support to help small community wastewater plants improve operations and efficiency and administers two low-interest state revolving loan fund programs that finance municipal wastewater treatment, water-quality improvement and drinking water projects. Funding is also provided for recycling, litter cleanup and scrap-tire-management. The *Office of Compliance Assistance and Pollution Protection* helps small businesses annually comply with environmental regulation. The office offers on-site assistance, training events, plain-English publications, support completing forms and other services that help identify and implement pollution prevention measures that save money, improve performance and benefit the environment. The *Office of Outreach and Customer Support* connects Ohio businesses and communities with the division's services.

The **Division of Environmental Response, Investigation and Enforcement** is responsible for the comprehensive response to emergency incidents impacting the environment and communities, providing technical and investigative support for solving crimes involving the environment, as well as ensuring that compliance and enforcement are efficient and consistent across all divisions and districts of Ohio EPA.

The **Division of Environmental Response and Revitalization** oversees investigation and cleanup of contaminated sites, including federal facilities; responds to and oversees cleanup of emergency releases and spills to the environment; and provides assistance to companies and communities that clean up and reuse brownfield sites.

The **Division of Environmental Services** provides laboratory services to other Ohio EPA divisions, state and local agencies and private entities. Division chemists and biologists analyze water, air, sediment and fish-tissue samples; inspect and certify laboratories; and provide technical assistance.

The **Division of Material and Waste Management** implements Ohio's solid waste, infectious waste, and construction and demolition debris programs. In addition to the traditional regulatory program, the division researches and promotes emerging

concepts and technologies associated with resource conservation, materials management and sustainability. The division also oversees state and local planning for long-term solid waste management.

The **Division of Surface Water** is mandated to ensure compliance with the federal Clean Water Act and works to increase the number of water bodies that can be safely used for swimming and fishing. The division issues permits to regulate wastewater treatment plants, factories and storm-water runoff; develops comprehensive watershed plans aimed at improving polluted streams; and samples streams, lakes and wetlands — including their fish, aquatic insects and plants — to determine the health of Ohio’s water bodies.

Department of Health

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) is a cabinet-level agency responsible for protecting and improving the health of all Ohioans by preventing disease, promoting good health and assuring access to quality care.

The agency’s divisions and offices and their responsibilities are as follows:

- **Bureau of Infectious Diseases:** prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases
- *Office of Health Preparedness:* provide direction, support and coordination in preventing, preparing for and responding to events that threaten the public’s health
- **Bureau of Health Promotion** and *Office of Health Improvement and Wellness:* build strong communities to enable Ohioans of all ages and abilities to live disease- and injury-free
- *Office of Health Policy and Performance Improvement:* address health inequities and disparities and support access to comprehensive, integrated health-care for all Ohioans
- **Bureau of Environmental Health and Radiation Protection:** assess and monitor environmental factors that potentially impact public health, including air, water, soil, food and physical and social features of surroundings and communities
- *Office of Health Assurance and Licensing:* regulate health care facilities and health care services, including nursing homes, home-health agencies and hospice care, through state licensure and federal certification rules.

Additionally, there are several offices and bureaus within the agency that assist with internal and external operations. These include the **Bureau of Vital Statistics**, which operates a statewide system registering births, deaths, fetal deaths, and other “vital records.” ODH, local health departments and other health providers use vital record statistics to assess population health and develop or adjust public health programs.

The **Public Health Laboratory** assists the agency, local health departments and clinicians across Ohio to investigate disease outbreaks and public health emergencies and identify disease causes to aid in treatment and prevention. The lab screens for diseases of public health interest, helps confirm the identity of uncommon infectious agents and determine epidemiological patterns and oversees the state's alcohol breath-testing program.

Department of Higher Education

The Ohio Department of Higher Education, (formerly known as the Ohio Board of Regents) is a Cabinet-level agency that oversees higher education for the state. The agency's main responsibilities include authorizing and approving new degree programs, managing state-funded financial aid programs and developing and advocating policies to maximize higher education's contributions to the state and its residents.

The **Chancellor** of the department advises the governor on higher education policy and implements the governor's plans for the state's public universities, colleges, regional campuses, community colleges and adult workforce and adult education centers.

Department of Insurance

The Ohio Department of Insurance (ODI) regulates the Ohio insurance industry and is charged with protecting the purchasing interests of the state's residents.

The **Consumer Affairs Division** responds to a variety of insurance inquiries and investigates complaints against insurance companies and agents. Consumer Affairs also helps monitor companies' compliance with Ohio insurance laws and regulations.

The *Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program (OSHIIP)*, funded by a federal grant, was founded in 1992 to provide Ohioans on Medicare with objective health insurance information and individual counseling. OSHIIP staff and a statewide network of trained volunteers educate consumers about Medicare, Medicare supplement insurance, long-term care insurance and other health insurance matters.

The **Fraud and Enforcement Division** investigates allegations of unlicensed insurance activity, insurance agent and agency misconduct and insurance fraud. The division is classified as a criminal justice agency and works with state, federal and local regulatory and law enforcement agencies when allegations are multi-jurisdictional. Fraud and Enforcement also investigates consumers, medical providers and third parties suspected of defrauding insurance companies. The division refers confirmed insurance law violations for administrative and/or criminal prosecution.

The **Risk Assessment Division** monitors the financial solvency of Ohio-based (domestic) insurance companies and monitors and coordinates regulatory oversight

of the financial condition of other insurers such as out-of-state insurers, international insurers and insurers who are the owners of their insurance companies.

The **Market Conduct Division** monitors insurance company compliance with Ohio insurance laws and regulations by examining their business practices, such as underwriting, marketing and claims handling.

The **Product Regulation and Actuarial Services Division** reviews policy forms, endorsements, contractual provisions and manual rules and rates for products marketed to Ohio consumers.

The **Licensing Division** administers testing and issues licenses to insurance agents, agencies, managing general agents, third-party administrators, reinsurance intermediaries, public insurance adjusters, viatical settlement brokers and surety bail bond agents. Agent Licensing also monitors agent compliance with continuing education.

The Department of Insurance's *Office of Consumer Service* provides pamphlets, buying guides and price comparisons.

Department of Job and Family Services

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) is responsible for supervising the state's public assistance, employment services, unemployment compensation, child and adult protective services, adoption, child care and child support programs.

Office of Child Support provides services designed to help ensure that children receive the financial and medical support they are legally entitled to and deserve. By working with both parents, the program seeks to establish support orders and maintain consistent support payments. The office also establishes policies and guidelines based on federal and state laws. It processes support payments and provides leadership and guidance to county child support enforcement agencies (CSEAs).

Office of Chief Inspector maintains security of ODJFS-owned and leased buildings, conducts investigations and is responsible for ensuring the agency can maintain or quickly return to business during emergencies.

Office of Families and Children oversees Ohio's adoption, foster care, child protective services and adult protective services programs.

Office of Family Assistance oversees cash and food-assistance programs, work support programs for recipients of cash and food assistance, the state's child-care program, refugee programs and the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. Questions about a specific case or services can be answered by county departments of jobs and family services.

Office of Fiscal and Monitoring Services includes the bureaus of County Finance and Technical Assistance, Grants Management and Federal Reporting Services, Budget and Cost Management, Program Integrity, Monitoring and Consulting

Services, Data Management and Reporting, Audit Resolution and Internal Controls and Compliance.

Office of Unemployment and Insurance Operations assists employers in meeting their labor needs, helps job seekers in attaining gainful employment, aids unemployed workers by maintaining benefit payment programs, supports benefit payments by collecting employer contribution payments (taxes) and administers job placement and job training programs.

Office of Workforce Development administers several federal workforce programs and oversees a network of local OhioMeansJobs centers, which provide free job training and other services for Ohioans looking for work and employers seeking workers.

Ohio Department of Medicaid

Medicaid and Medicare are frequently confused. Medicare is a federal insurance program for persons 65 or older regardless of income. Medicaid is an aid program to cover health care costs for low-income or disabled individuals of all ages. For those who qualify for both, Medicaid can supplement Medicare.

The Medicaid program was created in 1965 through amendments to the federal Social Security Act. The federal government provides matching funds to states to assist in the cost and administration of the program. The national program is administered by each state under broad federal guidelines.

Launched in July 2013, the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) is Ohio's first cabinet-level Medicaid agency. Through a network of more than 83,000 active providers, in 2016, ODM delivered health care coverage to 2.9 million residents of Ohio daily.

Roughly 80 percent of Ohio's Medicaid population received benefits through five private managed care plans under contract with ODM.

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) receives state and federal funding and distributes those funds to local county-level mental health systems administered by alcohol, drug addiction and mental health (ADAMH) or community mental health (CMH) boards. OhioMHAS creates priorities for the use of funds, with the goal of providing a continuum of services that efficiently and effectively meets consumers' needs.

While most mental health services are provided in outpatient settings, there are six **state hospitals** operated by OhioMHAS to provide inpatient services. These specialized facilities provide short-term, intensive treatment to patients inside their doors and in community programs run by county mental health boards.

Ten community forensic psychiatric centers provide comprehensive forensic evaluation services for Ohio's criminal court system. Each provides services to desig-

nated counties in its region. Forensic center staff also consult with and train local criminal justice system personnel, county boards and community health agencies and provide expert testimony for their local courts.

Ohio Pharmacy Services provides a diverse array of goods and services to state facilities, county health departments, community mental health agencies, free clinics, county jails and nonprofits that include:

- pharmaceuticals and over-the counter medications
- laboratory, medical and pharmacy supplies
- naloxone/Project DAWN kits (County Health Department Grant Program)

Community-based agencies providing mental health services funded by a community mental health board or operating a residential facility subject to licensure by OhioMHAS must be certified by the department. Community mental health agencies may also voluntarily request certification. Agencies are certified every three years.

Private psychiatric hospitals providing acute inpatient mental health services must be licensed annually.

Ohio Department of Natural Resources

At its creation in 1949, the department was charged with formulating and executing a long-term comprehensive plan and program for the development and wise use of the natural resources of the state. ODNR manages more than 590,000 acres of state-owned land, including 74 state parks, 21 state forests, 136 nature preserves and 117 wildlife areas. The department also has jurisdiction over more than 120,000 acres of inland waters, 7,000 miles of streams, 481 miles of the Ohio River, and 2.25 million acres of Lake Erie.

In addition, ODNR licenses all hunting, fishing and watercraft in the state and is responsible for overseeing and permitting all mining, monitoring dam safety, managing water resources, mapping the state's major geologic structures and mineral resources and promoting recycling and litter prevention through grant programs in local communities.

The **Division of Wildlife** manages Ohio's wildlife areas and helps Ohio landowners conserve and improve fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. The division also manages Ohio's fisheries, which cover 124,000 acres of Lake Erie, and 481 miles of the Ohio River.

The **Division of State Parks and Watercraft** maintains and manages more than 174,000 acres of parklands and waters. There are state parks in 59 of Ohio's 88 counties. Through the Waterways Safety Fund, the division works with local, state and federal agencies and with conservancy districts to provide funding assistance for recreational boating public access projects statewide. This work enables boaters to enjoy free parking and boat launch facilities at hundreds of public sites, including most of Ohio's state parks.

The **Division of Natural Areas and Preserves** manages Ohio's 136 State Nature Preserves. Funding from Ohio's tax donation program supports improvements to trails, parking and signage and increases accessibility.

The **Division of Forestry** operates and maintains Ohio's 21 state forests, encompassing nearly 200,000 acres. The properties include more than 350 miles of back-country bridle trails, more than 80 miles of backpack trails, many day-use and mountain biking trails as well as camping, hunting, wildlife-viewing and gathering places.

The division administers a forest protection area of more than 8 million acres of publicly and privately owned land, mostly in southern and eastern Ohio. It is also the lead agency providing forestry assistance to private woodland owners in the state, helping them prepare timber sales, create habitat for forest wildlife, plant trees for future forests and to better understand the many benefits that their forests provide. In addition, the division conducts surveys and suppression activities for various forest health threats, including Asian longhorned beetles, hemlock woolly adelgids, emerald ash borers and non-native invasive plants.

The **Division of Geological Survey** has researched and reported on the state's complex geology since 1837. Its archives hold more than 175 years of information and data on the state's wealth of energy, water and mineral resources. The division maintains research on glacial deposits, mineral aggregates, salt, coal, oil and gas, seismicity and the Lake Erie shoreline.

The **Division of Mineral Resources Management** regulates the development and restoration of coal and industrial minerals mining sites. Multiple programs address environmental and safety aspects of coal and industrial minerals extraction. Program and support services include permitting, hydrology, bonding, inspection and enforcement, abandoned mine land, engineering and design services, mine safety, data and records management and geographic information systems.

The **Division of Oil and Gas Resources Management** regulates Ohio's oil and natural gas industry, including well pad construction, permitting, drilling and production of oil and natural gas; the disposal of brine and fluids produced; and the plugging of wells and reclamation of well sites after production ends. Staff are required to inspect the drilling, restoration and plugging of all oil and gas wells in the state.

The **Division of Water Resources** is primarily responsible for management of Ohio's surface and ground water. It regulates construction and repair of dams and levees, builds local and state capacity to support floodplains, collects water well logs and maintains and distributes data on water resources and implements the Great Lakes Compact, an agreement among the states bordering the Great Lakes for the management of the lakes' water supply.

The **Division of Engineering** provides a wide range of engineering and construc-

tion services to ODNR's landholding divisions. Its projects include constructing and restoring marinas, boat launches, lodges and other park facilities. The division rehabilitates dams to protect the public from catastrophic dam failures and to safeguard local economies tied to ODNR-owned reservoirs.

The *GIS Program*, shared by multiple divisions, manages the Geographic Information Systems, which are used to manage spatial data. These technologies include computer-aided design systems, automated and desktop mapping systems, remote sensing and image analysis systems and their related database management systems. The program provides searchable data and metadata and interactive maps of state features and resources.

In addition, ODNR's *Office of Coastal Management* sets management goals for Ohio's portion of Lake Erie, its coast and watershed. The *Office of Real Estate and Land Management* coordinates and reviews proposed large-scale public and private projects affecting state land and natural resources. The office coordinates recreational grant programs used to expand recreational opportunities for Ohioans and distributes funds awarded for community recreation projects.

Since 1983, the *Wildlife Tax Check-off* has enabled Ohioans to check off a box on their state income tax returns to make donations from their tax refunds to the Natural Areas and Preserves program and to the Non-Game and Endangered Species program.

Department of Public Safety

The Department of Public Safety promotes safety on Ohio's roads and develops and implements Ohio's Highway Safety Plan.

The **Administration Division** publishes statistics on motor vehicle accidents.

The **Ohio State Highway Patrol** enforces traffic laws, investigates accidents, assists motorists in distress and promotes traffic safety. The patrol offers statewide emergency response services, investigates criminal activities on state-owned property and provides security for the governor and other dignitaries. The patrol inspects school and church buses, supervises driver's license examinations and licenses commercial driving schools and instructors.

The **Investigative Unit** enforces state, federal and local laws, with emphasis on liquor, food stamp and tobacco offenses; and offers educational guidance and professional assistance to law enforcement agencies and to the general public.

The **Bureau of Motor Vehicles** (BMV) issues motor vehicle license plates and registrations, driver's licenses, identification cards and motor vehicle dealer and salesperson's licenses. BMV is the repository of motor vehicle title records. The registrar of the bureau is appointed by and serves under the director of the Department of Public Safety.

Registrations are issued through a statewide network of deputy registrars. The motor vehicle registration fees they collect are redistributed to local governments

according to a formula set by law and may be used for road construction and repair. Special license plates are issued by the BMV, for a fee. The fees collected help support specific state entities such as Lake Erie, recreational parks and wildlife programs. Motor Voter: When you visit a deputy registrar of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to register a vehicle or to change your driver's license because you have moved or changed your name, you may register to vote or update your voter registration at the same time.

The **Division of Emergency Medical Services** (EMS) is responsible for certifying all emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and fire personnel in the state. It accredits and charters schools for EMT and fire training.

The **Ohio Emergency Management Agency** is the central point of coordination within the state for response to and recovery from disasters. When not in a response or recovery mode, EMA works to ensure that the state and the public are prepared to respond to an emergency or disaster. EMA works in conjunction with county emergency management agencies to respond to emergencies. When an emergency exceeds the capacity of local government, requests for assistance are directed to EMA. If an emergency exceeds the resources of EMA, the state requests assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The *Ohio Office of Homeland Security* is responsible for coordinating the homeland security efforts and initiatives of the Department of Public Safety. This office is responsible for allocating homeland security funds to various first-responder and law enforcement agencies throughout the state.

Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

The Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) administers and operates Ohio's adult correctional system and provides for the custody and rehabilitation of convicted adult criminal offenders. All adults convicted of felonies for which the sentence is at least six months enter the state's prison system. Youths bound over from a juvenile court and convicted in adult court may also be sentenced to the state's prison system. The department is responsible for the administration and operation of both the institutional and the community-related phases of the adult correctional system, including parole and probation. There are two major functional divisions in the department.

The *Office of Prisons* oversees Ohio's minimum-, medium-, close- and maximum-security prisons for male and female offenders. The prisons are grouped into four regions for administrative purposes. In addition to providing oversight for prison operations, the office provides support services for education, classification, critical incident management, recreation, religious services, unit management, security, youthful offender programming, and the management of disruptive inmate groups at all Ohio prisons.

Within Ohio's prisons, *Ohio Penal Industries*, provides industrial training oppor-

tunities to Ohio inmates. The *Office of Correctional Health Care* provides inmates with medical services, including mental health and drug/alcohol treatment. The *Office of the Chief Inspector* monitors inmate grievance procedures and conducts internal administrative investigations for the department.

The **Division of Parole and Community Services** works with local criminal justice officials and community and state agencies to provide community sanctions for adult offenders. Parole, or post-release control, is a period of supervision prior to full release from the state's correctional system. There are three major branches of this division: the Adult Parole Authority, the Bureau of Community Sanctions and the Office of Victim Services.

The *Corrections Training Academy* provides instruction to department employees and fellow law-enforcement agencies.

Department of Taxation

The Department of Taxation administers and enforces most state taxes and specified local taxes. The department makes rules and regulations for tax administration, prepares reporting forms, collects certain taxes, audits returns, levies tax penalties and supervises the valuation of real property. The head of the department, called the tax commissioner, appoints division administrators. Operating divisions have jurisdiction over specific taxes or groups of taxes.

The divisions are: the **Audit Division**, **Bankruptcy Division**, **Business Tax Division** (commercial activity, corporation franchise, municipal net profit and sales and use taxes) **Compliance Division**, **Criminal Investigation and Enforcement Division**, **Employment Tax Division** (employer and school district withholding, pass-through entity and estate taxes), **Excise and Energy Tax Division** (motor fuel, international fuel tax agreement, public utility, tobacco, casino, and various excise taxes), **Individual Income/School District Income Tax Division**, **Revenue Account Division**, **Tax Analysis Division**, **Tax Equalization Division/Real Property**, and **Tax Processing and Data Capture**.

The *Tax Commissioner's Hearing Board* reviews taxpayer complaints, assessments or audits. Taxpayers may appeal determinations made by the commissioner's board to the *Board of Tax Appeals*. This quasi-judicial board also hears appeals of decisions made by county budget commissions and boards of revision

Department of Transportation

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is responsible for planning, building, and maintaining a transportation system that integrates highway, rail, and air networks. The department interacts with local and federal government entities to coordinate the funding of maintenance and new construction projects and to provide technical and administrative assistance. ODOT has direct responsibility for all of Ohio's interstate highways, as well as all U.S. and state routes located

outside municipal boundaries. The remaining highways, bridges and streets are the responsibility of municipalities, counties and townships. State and federal gasoline taxes help fund new highway construction and maintenance.

Real-time Traffic Information: The Ohio Department of Transportation offers real-time traffic and weather information for Ohioans from a vast network of pavement sensors, traffic cameras, and weather stations for the state of Ohio at <http://www.ohgo.com>.

The **Division of Construction Management** provides support and guidance for construction of the transportation systems. It contains the *Office of Construction Administration, Office of Contract Sales, Office of Estimating, Office of Materials Management, Office of Alternative Project Delivery* and *Outdoor Advertising Device Control Section*.

The **Division of Engineering** provides specialized engineering, technical assistance and contract support. It includes the *Office of CADD and Mapping Services, Office of Consultant Services, Office of Geotechnical Engineering, Office of Hydraulic Engineering, Office of Pavement Engineering, Office of Real Estate, Office of Roadway Engineering* and *Office of Structural Engineering*.

The **Division of Planning** collects, analyzes, forecasts, measures and reports information about Ohio's transportation systems.

The *Transportation Review Advisory Council* was established in 1997 to provide a selection process for state funding of major new construction projects. It consists of nine members, including the director of ODOT, who serves as chairperson. The governor appoints six members and the speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives and the president of the Ohio Senate each appoint one.

The *Ohio Rail Development Commission*, an independent agency within ODOT, promotes economic development and rail-highway safety.

The five-member *Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission* is the organization that administered the construction and continues the maintenance of the east-west turnpike across the northern part of the state.

Department of Veterans Services

The mission of the Department of Veterans Services is to provide opportunities and resources for Ohio's veteran community through advocacy, collaboration and partnerships. It assists returning veterans with employment, higher education and accessing health care and housing. Its programs include the Ohio Veterans Homes, comprising three facilities: a nursing home in Georgetown and a nursing home and a domiciliary for independent living in Sandusky. Both homes and the domiciliary are open to honorably discharged veterans of periods of armed conflicts who are or were Ohio residents for at least one year during their lifetime.

The Department administers the Ohio Veterans Bonus Program, which has been awarding bonuses to Ohio veterans since the Civil War. The payment is \$100 per

month to veterans who served in Afghanistan after Oct. 7, 2001, up to a maximum of \$1,000. For veterans who served in other parts of the world during this time, the payment is \$50 per month up to a \$500 maximum. Veterans medically discharged as a result of combat service can receive \$1,000, regardless of how much time they spent in the Afghanistan theater, plus up to \$500 for service elsewhere. Family members of deceased veterans may be eligible for benefits through the Ohio program.

The *Veterans Educational Programs Office* oversees the federally-funded Troops to Teachers program and, as the State Approving Agency, is responsible for ensuring schools and training facilities for veterans meet state and federal standards.

Bureau of Workers' Compensation

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) provides medical and wage loss compensation to injured workers or their families for work-related injuries, diseases, or death. The structure of this program is outlined in the Ohio Constitution in provisions adopted in 1912. Responsibility for implementing the program lies with BWC and with the *Industrial Commission of Ohio* (IC). BWC acts as the administrative and insurance arm, while the IC hears and decides contested workers' compensation claims and issues. BWC has a central office in Columbus and 11 regional offices throughout the state.

BWC provides insurance to about two-thirds of Ohio's work force. The remaining workers receive coverage directly through their employers. These companies are part of a self-insurance program for large and financially stable employers that meet qualifications set by BWC. In fiscal year 2015, BWC provided workers' compensation coverage to approximately 253,000 employers, and paid out nearly \$1.6 billion in benefits. Premiums and assessments from employers totaled more than \$1.9 billion. All BWC premiums are the sole responsibility of the employer and are not passed on to the employee. Premiums are deposited into the State Insurance Fund to cover current and anticipated costs of claims. The IC is the claims adjudicative arm of Ohio's workers' compensation system. The commission's role is to assist in fairly resolving disputes over the awarding of workers' compensation benefits. Hearings on disputed claims are conducted at three levels within the commission. A district hearing officer hears the initial appeal. An injured worker or employer may appeal the district decision to a staff hearing officer, who, by law, must hear the case. A party may appeal the staff decision to the IC commissioners, who decide whether to accept or reject the appeal. In total, the commission conducts approximately 130,000 hearings each year.

The three commissioners are appointed by the governor. One commissioner represents employers, one employees, and one the public. The governor also selects the chairperson.

The *Workers' Compensation Oversight Commission* meets monthly for duties such as: making recommendations on BWC policy, investments and premium rates;

reviewing the effectiveness of policies and operations; and reviewing independent financial audits of BWC.

The commission consists of 11 members. The governor appoints five voting members to represent various constituent groups. The treasurer of the state appoints one investment expert while the Ohio Senate president and the Ohio House speaker jointly appoint another investment expert. Finally, there are four non-voting legislative members.

Department of Youth Services

The Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) is the juvenile justice agency for the state. Ohio law permits only felony offenders to be committed to DHS; youth who are adjudicated for misdemeanors are assigned to community-based programs by the local county juvenile court.

DYS operates three facilities, all for male offenders, where it confines felony offenders, age 10 to 21, who have been adjudicated and committed by one of Ohio's 88 county juvenile courts. Judges send each youth to DHS under a court-specified minimum sentence based on the seriousness of the offense. Youth committed to DHS must serve at least the minimum sentence unless the committing court approves an early release. After the minimum sentence has been served, the department may retain jurisdiction until the youth reaches the age of 21 or until the department recommends discharge. In homicide cases, youth must remain with the department until they are 21. During their stay at DHS, youth are engaged in programming designed to address their criminological and behavioral needs. Each of the DHS facilities operates a year-round school that offers general curriculum as well as vocational opportunities.

Beyond youth in DHS facilities and those on parole, DHS funds and supports 664 community-based programs throughout the state. More than 88,000 youths have been admitted annually to services encouraging positive change. These range from prevention and diversion programs to residential treatment and community treatment for mental health, sex offending and substance abuse.

The DHS **Release Authority** (RA) was established in 1998. With few exceptions, such as a judge granting a child early release with court supervision or DHS supervision, the RA is the final and sole authority deciding whether and when youths committed to the department's custody are released or discharged and under what conditions. In each case, the RA must weigh public safety, the best interests of the youth and the interests of crime victims, using evidence-based tools and practices.

The RA board consists of five board members appointed by the director, with the chair serving as the bureau chief.

The Executive

Supplemental Agencies

The operation of state government relies on a variety of boards, commissions, authorities and councils that provide services focused on particular issues that often cannot be addressed by larger government departments. Many supplemental agencies are fully staffed and operate daily while others have minimal staffing and may not function on a daily basis. Funding for each agency is dependent on how the organization was established.

Supplemental agencies can be created by the governor, the legislature or major departments. While the governor may appoint members to boards and commissions, the balance of powers requires that the Senate consent to the governor's appointments. Many of these supplementary agencies have been included in the discussion of the state departments to which they are related. Some started as state agencies and for various reasons the government converted them to nonprofit agencies. They and others of a more general nature are treated separately here.

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

The *Public Utilities Commission of Ohio* (PUCO) regulates providers of utility services, including electric and natural gas companies, local and long-distance telephone companies, water and wastewater companies and rail and trucking companies. PUCO was created to assure Ohioans adequate, safe and reliable public utility services at a fair price. More recently, the commission gained responsibility for facilitating competitive utility choices for Ohio consumers. PUCO is composed of five commissioners appointed to rotating, five-year terms by the governor. No more than three commissioners can be members of or affiliated with the same political party. One seat on the Commission becomes available each year.

Any Ohioan who is not employed by a public utility and does not have a financial interest in a public utility can apply for an open seat. The governor selects commissioners from a list of names submitted by the PUCO Nominating Council, a broad-based 12-member panel charged with screening candidates for commissioner.

Ohio Consumers' Counsel

The *Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel* (OCC) is the statewide legal representative for Ohio's residential consumers in matters related to their investor-owned

electric, natural gas, telephone and water services. It advocates for consumers in proceedings before the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, federal regulatory agencies, appellate courts and the Ohio General Assembly. The office monitors public utilities' compliance with regulatory standards for consumer protection. The OCC also educates consumers about utility issues that affect their bills and quality of service. Consumers may call the office at 877-742-5622.

The consumers' counsel, which directs the office, is selected by a nine-member bipartisan governing board representing family farmers, organized labor and residential consumers. The Attorney General appoints each governing board member.

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), formerly known as the Rehabilitation Services Commission, is a state agency charged with assisting Ohioans with disabilities in finding employment and independence. A seven-member commission advises the agency. The governor appoints members with the advice and consent of the Ohio Senate. No more than four commissioners may be of the same political party. Three must be representatives of the rehabilitation profession, including at least one member from the field of services to Ohioans who are blind. At least four commissioners must have a disability and two to three of them must have received vocational rehabilitation services from a state agency or the Veteran's Administration.

Two OOD bureaus provide eligible Ohioans with vocational rehabilitation services to prepare them for employment. The **Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired** serves people who are blind or have severe visual impairments. The **Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation** serves people with all other types of disabilities. Counselors in both bureaus work with clients to develop individualized rehabilitation programs that may include continuing education, specialized job training and on-the-job training, work adjustment training, and job placement. Both bureaus also provide tools and equipment to those in need of assistive technology or adaptive devices in order to obtain employment.

The agency's **Division of Disability Determination** is responsible for determining the eligibility for Ohio's Social Security Disability Determination and Supplemental Security Income claims on behalf of the federal Social Security Administration.

Ohio Civil Rights Commission

The *Ohio Civil Rights Commission* (OCRC) is primarily responsible for enforcing state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination. The commission receives and investigates charges of discrimination in employment, public accommodations, housing, higher education and credit. The OCRC then renders formal determinations and, when it finds unlawful discrimination, attempts to broker a settlement between the parties.

Discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, disability, age, familial status (families with children) or military status is prohibited. Any person living or working in Ohio can file a charge of discrimination with one of the commission's regional offices in Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, or Toledo. Persons aware of alleged discriminatory practices or individuals who believe they have been discriminated against may file charges. The regional offices investigate charges and make recommendations. There is no fee for using OCRC services. Both parties of a discrimination complaint may appeal rulings for reconsideration by the commission. The parties also may appeal to a court of common pleas. The OCRC receives and investigates thousands of official charges of discrimination each year.

The commission is responsible for educating constituents and stakeholders about Ohio's laws against discrimination. It also prepares a comprehensive educational program for the students of Ohio's public schools. These programs are designed to eliminate prejudice, its harmful effects and its incompatibility with American principles of equality and fair play. The governor appoints the five members of the commission to serve staggered five-year terms.

Ohio Public Defender Commission

The *Ohio Public Defender Commission* provides a system of legal representation for indigent persons at state expense. Indigent persons may not be imprisoned for any offense if they have not been represented by counsel. Counsel must be available for interrogations and present for parole revocation hearings unless that right is waived.

The commission is bipartisan and consists of nine members: five appointed by the governor and four by the Ohio Supreme Court. More than half of the commissioners must be lawyers. The commission establishes standards for indigence and appoints a state public defender to coordinate and supervise public defense systems at the local level to ensure that they meet standards set by the commission.

Professional Boards

A number of boards have been established to determine the qualifications necessary for admission to the practice of a particular profession or skill in Ohio. Examples include the *State Medical Board of Ohio*, *Ohio State Cosmetology and Barber Board* and *State of Ohio Architects Board*. The boards conduct examinations, issue licenses and collect fees from eligible candidates. Members are appointed by the governor and most are required to have professional qualifications in the field.

Ohio Ethics Commission

The six-member bipartisan *Ohio Ethics Commission* administers and enforces the Ohio Ethics Law and financial disclosure requirements for all elected or appointed state and local public officials and public employees, except legislators, judges

and their staffs. The commission was created as a part of the Ohio Ethics Law of 1973, which prohibits public officials and employees from misusing their official position to benefit themselves, their family members, business associates or others where there is a conflict of interest.

The Joint Legislative Ethics Committee and the Board of Professional Conduct of the Ohio Supreme Court have jurisdiction over the officeholders and employees in their respective branches of government.

The governor appoints and the Senate confirms the six commission members. The commission provides educational sessions and information to the public, issues advisory opinions that interpret the Ohio Ethics Law for prospective or hypothetical situations, investigates violations and holds hearings to refer cases to the appropriate authority for prosecution. By law, all commission investigations are confidential.

Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs

The commission, created in 1977, serves as a liaison between government and the Spanish-speaking people of Ohio and advises the governor and General Assembly on developing programs to meet their needs, including education, housing, employment and health. The governor appoints the commission's 11 members, some recommended by the legislative leadership. All commission members must speak Spanish, be of Spanish-speaking origin and be U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents.

The *Office of Hispanic/Latino Affairs* serves as the executive office for the commission. The office also provides information about Spanish-speaking attorneys, translators, and other services to the Spanish-speaking community.

Commission on Minority Health

The goal of the *Commission on Minority Health* is to eliminate the higher rates of disease and poorer health outcomes that exist among racial and ethnic minority populations compared to non-minority populations. The commission established Local Offices of Minority Health in Akron, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown. At the state level and at these offices, the commission is responsible for supporting health disparity research and promoting public health initiatives, legislative action, public policy and change.

Its priority populations are African-American, African, Asian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Latino American and Native American. The commission currently focuses on infant mortality, cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, substance abuse, violence and lupus.

Ohio Department of Health Women's Program

The purpose of the *Women's Health Program* at ODH is to improve women's health through initiatives addressing issues ranging from pregnancy to preventing

chronic diseases. Women suffer more frequently from cancer, stroke, diabetes and other chronic diseases than do men. The program offers education and resources to help women live and eat healthier; navigate breast and cervical cancer screenings in their area of the state (free to women who qualify); breast feed, maintain a healthy pregnancy and provide proper nutrition to infants and young children. Programs also provide resources to prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual violence and human trafficking.

Ohio Women Veterans Advisory Committee

Part of the Ohio Department of Veteran's Services, the advisory committee advocates for women veterans' issues and is a resource the state's 67,000 women veterans may use to learn about and access benefits, entitlements, education, employment opportunities and job training they've earned through their service. Committee members must be honorably discharged from the service. They and Ohio Women Veterans program managers are located throughout the state. The committee website includes listings of activities and events that the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars chapters, other organizations and the Ohio government have scheduled that may be of interest or benefit to women veterans.

Office of Opportunities for New Americans

The *Office of Opportunities for New Americans* (OONA) is charged with identifying and taking down barriers that prevent or impede new immigrants' integration into society and economic success. The office's duties include aligning existing or new programs and policies that attract new immigrants and support workforce training, education and occupational licensing for legal immigrants. The office was created within the Developmental Services Agency, by Gov. John Kasich's executive order in 2018.

To help tackle the responsibilities, the 12-member *New Americans Advisory Board*, which includes members of immigrant communities, businesses and non-profit organizations, works with the Ohio departments of Education, Higher Education, Job and Family Services and Commerce; the Development Services Agency and Office of Workforce Transformation to provide guidance to the office. The office website directs immigrants to a number of current services and resources. The office, like any created by executive order, is subject to change or closure by subsequent executive orders.

Ohio Office of Health Transformation

The *Office of Health Transformation* is charged with reducing the number of uninsured by extending Medicaid to more Ohioans, streamlining and coordinating care among departments of Medicaid, Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Aging and more; reducing costs while improving health outcomes, expanding community behavioral health capacity and much more. The office is

responsible for working with government agencies, private insurers and health care providers to shift away from health care payments based on the number of services provided to payments based on the value of care, that is to reward providers for services that improve or maintain health. The office was created by executive order of Gov. John Kasich in 2011. When Gov. Mike DeWine took office in 2019, he gave administrative authority over the office to the director of RecoveryOhio in his executive order creating the Governor's RecoveryOhio Initiative

New African Immigrants Commission

The 11-member commission is responsible for identifying the needs of the estimated 110,000 sub-Saharan African immigrants in Ohio and working with state agencies to promote the delivery of appropriate state services. The commission's goal is to enable the immigrants, many of whom are refugees, to become self-sufficient. The commission was created by legislation in 2009 but only began operating when Gov. John Kasich appointed its first six members in 2017. The commission has created five standing committees that will execute many of the commission responsibilities: Education and Cultural Affairs, Workforce and Business Development, Social Services and Outreach, Health and Wellness, and Legal Services. Commission members travel the state on listening tours, to learn each region's or community's needs.

Ohio State School for the Blind

The Ohio State School for the Blind (OSSB) offers elementary, middle and high school education, including adaptive physical education and multiple disabilities education, to meet the requirements of each student's Individualized Education Program. The Ohio Department of Education oversees the school. OSSB teaches life skills, use of technology and job skills and provides extracurricular opportunities in athletics, music and art. Students are taught skills needed to travel independently and safely. They may receive support services, such as speech and physical therapy. The school provides services statewide to families and school districts teaching visually impaired students. Established as the Ohio Institute for the Education of the Blind in 1839, it is the oldest school for the blind in the United States.

Ohio School for the Deaf

The Ohio School for the Deaf (OSD) provides programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing infants and preschoolers and a kindergarten-through-12th-grade curriculum in American Sign Language and English, comparable to Ohio public schools' curriculum. The Ohio Department of Education oversees the school, which is open to residential and day students. OSD focuses on social, academic and career development. It offers athletics and provides speech therapy, psychological testing, counseling, technology instruction and teaches transition to adult life. OSD also works with Ohio schools and educational programs serving deaf and hard-of-hearing

students and their families in an effort to meet each student's individual needs. The OSD Alumni Association is responsible for the country's only elderly care facility designed for and run by deaf persons.

Disability Rights Ohio

The mission of the nonprofit Disability Rights Ohio, formerly Ohio Legal Rights Services, is to protect and advocate for the human, civil and legal rights of Ohioans with a wide range of disabilities. The agency helps people with disabilities integrate into Ohio communities; solve problems with abuse, neglect and discrimination; obtain assistive technology devices and services, housing, employment, special education and access to voting. It also advocates for and protects the rights of people with disabilities in the juvenile and adult justice systems. Among the people it assists are those with mental illness, developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury and beneficiaries of Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance.

The agency is designated under federal law as the state system providing these protections and advocacy and as the state's Client Assistance Program (CAP) under the Rehabilitation Act. In its role as CAP, the agency is a legal advocate for people applying for or receiving services from the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation or Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired and/or the Independent Living Centers throughout Ohio.

Ohio Housing Finance Agency

The Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) is a nonprofit designed to help first-time home-buyers, renters, the elderly and others to find affordable housing that fits their needs. The agency provides financial education and guidance to help would-be home-buyers. OHFA works with lenders to offer loans aimed at making buying a home affordable to low- and moderate-income individuals and families. It also administers the Save the Dream Ohio program to help those struggling to pay their mortgage to prevent foreclosure. The agency's Office of Housing Policy collaborates with Ohio colleges and universities on housing research and to develop policies designed to meet the state's needs for affordable rentals and single-owner homes. OHFA provides developers tax support and incentives to build or renovate low- and moderate-income single-family and multi-family housing. The agency also offers guidance to help developers comply with regulations and keep their project financially viable.

Other Agencies

A more comprehensive list of state agencies may be found at: www.ohio.gov/agencies.

Financing State Government

Taxes and fees paid by people and business finance the state government. The state budget is an economic plan of how money is to be collected and spent. There are four major budgets created by the state: the operating budget, capital budget, transportation budget and Bureau of Worker's Compensation budget. Each budget covers two fiscal years (FY), also known as a biennium, and is therefore referred to as a biennial budget. Ohio's fiscal year begins on July 1 and runs through June 30 of the following year. The fiscal year is designated by the calendar year in which it ends; for example, the period July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020, is FY 2020, or FY20. The biennial budget that begins July 1, 2019, and concludes June 30, 2021, is the FY 2020-21 budget. Law requires all states to balance their budget, i.e. expenses cannot exceed revenues for any biennium.

Ohio's "all funds" budget, containing taxes, federal funds and special purpose funds, totals \$65.7 billion for FY 2018 and \$67.1 billion for FY 2019. The major contributor to the totals is the General Revenue Fund, which is where Ohio deposits the major state-imposed taxes, such as sales, income and business taxes. Details in the fund show which taxes contribute the most and least to paying for state government. This information combined with tax rates and local taxing data can be used to analyze where Ohio has shifted the burden on taxpayers over time and to compare Ohio's tax practices to other states. The General Revenue Fund totals 32.2 billion in FY 2018 and 33.3 billion in FY 2019.

History of the State Budget

Ohio's early budgets reflect the larger nation's growth and rapid change. The first budget, in 1803, totaled only \$20,000, with \$1,400 of that allocated just to firewood; the state payroll was only \$16,000. Sixty years later, in the midst of the Civil War, the budget climbed to \$813,000. Well over a third -- \$314,000 -- was allocated to military expenditures, while social services consumed \$159,000 and education \$55,000. By 1931, early in the Great Depression, the state budget reached \$65.7 million, allotting \$3.1 million for agriculture, \$4.2 million for welfare, \$1.9 million for education and \$4.5 million for the prohibition of alcohol.

Some jokingly say money from the fund has three purposes: to medicate, to educate, and to incarcerate – given that the top three expenditures are typically for Medicaid, schools, and prisons. In fact, as more of Ohio’s population became dependent on Medicaid-funded services during the Great Recession that began in 2008 – services including nursing home care, indigent births, children’s health insurance, mental health and addiction treatment, and more – the available budget for non-Medicaid social services grew less and less.

Nationally, there has been an overwhelming trend among states toward using annual rather than biennial budgets. Ohio is the largest state that continues to use biennial budgeting. Gov. John Kasich, however, instituted a more formal “mid-biennium review,” beginning with the 2012-2013 biennium, than had previously existed. As a result, significant annual reviews of and changes to the budget are more common.

Because of the significant time and effort required to enact a budget, the state divides the work into an operating budget, transportation budget and bureau of Workers Compensation budget enacted in odd-numbered years and a capital budget enacted in even-numbered years. This chapter focuses primarily on the operating budget and, to a lesser extent, on the capital budget. In general, funding for state highways, bridges, public transportation and other transportation uses is allocated or appropriated through the biennial transportation budget. Funding for medical and compensation benefits for work-related injuries is allocated through the bureau’s budget.

The Line-Item Veto

Most state governors, including Ohio’s, have the ability to use a provision known as the line-item veto. The line-item veto provision allows the governor to veto a part of a bill that contains a fiscal appropriation while signing the rest of the bill into law. In 1996 the U.S. Congress passed a law granting the President the power to use the line-item veto; however, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the line-item veto at the federal level was unconstitutional. Ohio’s governors continue to use it at their discretion, but only in matters relating to appropriations.

Operating Budget

The operating budget is the fiscal plan the state government creates to cover the general costs of state government operations. In odd-numbered years, the governor is responsible for presenting the executive budget to the General Assembly. This is the proposed financial plan for the next biennium and includes the governor’s priorities for taxing and spending.

The Office of Budget and Management drafts an operating budget request for the governor based on the office's evaluation of funding requests submitted by each state agency and expected income. The governor's office then prepares and introduces the two-year executive budget in the Ohio House of Representatives, where all revenue proposals must originate. This typically happens in late January or early February, although newly elected governors are often granted more time to develop their first budget. The budget bill undergoes significant change as it passes through the normal legislative process of hearings and debates, first in the House, beginning in the House Finance Committee and its various subcommittees. The budget then undergoes the same process in the Senate.

A conference committee is almost always necessary to resolve differences between the House and Senate budget bills. The governor must then approve and sign the spending plan with or without line-item vetoes, by June 30 of the odd-numbered year. The governor's line-item veto power allows him/her to remove any line in the budget as well as any policy changes attached to the monetary appropriation, but he/she cannot add new language or move lines within the bill. The legislature may override vetoes if it can muster the necessary supermajority of 60 percent of the votes in each chamber.

The General Assembly is responsible for appropriating money for specific programs and levying sufficient taxes to ensure that revenues are available to pay for the programs authorized. Taxes are usually created and controlled through legislation but may also be increased or decreased by constitutional amendments proposed through legislative action or initiative petition. After passage of the budget, the Office of Budget and Management is responsible for monitoring and controlling spending. The budget passed by the General Assembly and signed into law by the governor is still nothing more than a plan based on expected revenues and expenditures. If economic conditions shift and revenues do not meet expectations, expenditures must be cut to conform to actual revenues. The governor must bring spending into balance with state income because the Ohio Constitution requires that the budget be balanced at the end of each biennium. In times of economic prosperity, revenues may exceed budgeted expectations while spending remains as appropriated, resulting in new spending or, more likely, a deposit into the state's Budget Stabilization Fund, commonly called the rainy day fund. The Ohio General Assembly created the rainy day fund with the intent this reserve fund be built up over time and used in emergencies.

The seven-member Controlling Board, explained on page 20, provides continuing legislative oversight.

Structure of the Operating Budget

The state uses hundreds of separate funds, much like checking accounts, to manage its finances. Each fund has a revenue source or sources, and each fund

makes payments for designated state programs, services, or projects. The budget is complex and includes both state revenues as well as federal funds. Analysts may refer to the “all funds” budget which includes both state and federal money, or “state-funds-only” budget. The largest state fund is the General Revenue Fund (GRF). All revenues coming into the state treasury that are not allocated by law to a specific fund or purpose are deposited into the GRF. Ohio is one of a handful of states that places federal monies in the GRF.

Revenue

In the most recent budget, federal funds comprise 30 percent of the GRF. Among state sources, taxes levied on sales and personal income are the greatest sources of revenue. **Sales and use tax:** The Ohio sales tax applies to the retail sale, lease and rental of tangible personal property as well as the sale of selected services in Ohio. When a vendor fails to apply the sales tax, as is often the case with online purchases, the buyer is responsible for paying the equivalent Ohio use tax directly to the state using a consumer’s tax form.

As of this publication, the state sales and use tax rate is 5.75 percent. Counties and regional transit authorities may levy additional sales and use taxes. Starting in 2004, in response to a budget shortfall, the General Assembly began extending the sales tax to collect money on services and goods that were previously exempted, such as lawn care, snow removal and equipment bought to provide internet services. Such an extension reflects Ohio’s transition from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-based economy. This is the largest source of taxpayer revenue in the GRF. Others include:

1. **Income tax:** The personal income tax on earnings, investments and retirement income was established in 1971 and will account for 25 percent of revenue in the FY 2018-19 budget.
2. **Commercial activity tax:** The CAT, as the tax is commonly called, is an annual tax imposed on the “privilege of doing business in Ohio,” and applies to businesses with Ohio taxable gross receipts of \$150,000 or more per calendar year. A similar tax, called the financial institutions tax, or FIT, is applied to banks, savings and loan associations and small lenders.
3. **Other state taxes:** Ohio levies taxes on utilities, so-called “sin taxes” that apply to the sale of alcoholic beverages and tobacco, severance taxes, insurance taxes, the gross casino revenue tax, a motor fuel tax and more. Property taxes and municipal income taxes are collected locally, by a county or municipality, and are not considered state taxes.

State income taxes in Ohio tend to be lower than in surrounding states. When considering only state taxes, Ohio has the lowest state tax collections per capita compared to nearby Midwestern (non-Appalachian) states. The first and historic reason for lower state taxes is rooted in the “home rule” history of Ohio and in the

fact that most government services – from schools to child protection to mental health and addiction services – are state supervised but locally or county administered. That means that the state contributes a modest amount of funding but expects most funds to be raised locally, usually through property tax levies. When local taxes are included, Ohio's combination of state and local taxes places it roughly in the middle for tax burden nationally.

The second reason for lower state taxes is a significant personal income tax reduction enacted in 2005 (HB 66-126) and phased in over several years, accounting for a nearly 18 percent reduction in that tax, followed by another 6.3 percent personal income tax reduction enacted in 2015.

The remaining GRF revenue comes from non-tax sources including money collected from licenses, fees and permits; the sale of bonds and notes; and interest accumulated from investments. Profits from the sale of lottery tickets are also deposited into the GRF. Voters passed a constitutional amendment in 1990 mandating that at least 30 percent of lottery profits go into the Lottery Profits for Education Fund, a budget fund that finances primary and secondary education.

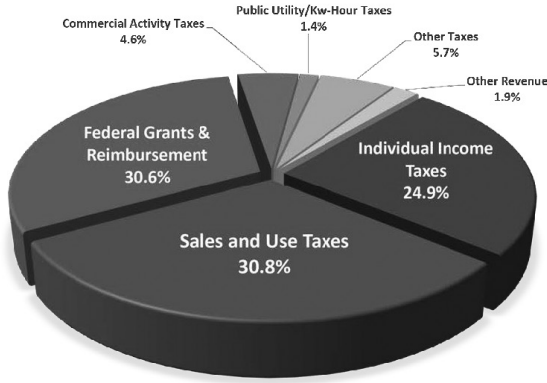
The General Assembly's standard practice since then is to deduct the amount of revenue contributed by the lottery fund from the amount that would normally have been appropriated for education purposes. As a result, the lottery's promised benefit to education has not been realized except to reduce reliance on other sources.

Over the years, federal funds have accounted for anywhere between 15 and 37 percent of revenue in the "all funds" budget. The increasing role of federal funds during the period 2008 to 2016 was due initially to federal stimulus funds appropriated to help the country recover from the Great Recession and then to the state's decision to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

Most state revenues are deposited in the GRF and it is the principal fund used to pay for state operating costs and finance state services. GRF money provides support for local government, in part by reimbursing local governments for local revenue lost through homestead exemptions and rollbacks – two property tax relief programs enacted by the legislature. However, in 2011, the Local Government Fund was cut in half, reducing state tax revenue traditionally shared with local governments by a total of more than \$1 billion by 2017. Other significant state cuts to local governments since then have included elimination of the estate tax (in January 2013) and the phasing out of the Tangible Personal Property Tax (TPPT), a tax applied on property used in business. Leaders of local governments across the state say that, taken all together, these losses have forced some local governments to reduce services or raise local taxes and fees.

Beyond the GRF, the overall state budget includes a number of restricted funds either generated by specific revenue sources (the Wildlife Fund, Workers' Compensation Fund) or that finance specified activities. Debt service funds exist to pay interest and principal on state debt incurred from the sale of bonds.

General Revenue Fund Sources

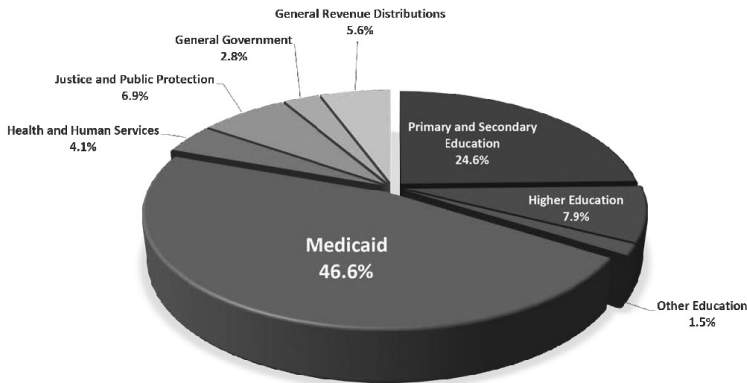


FY 2018-2019 Estimated (GRF) Revenue

State Taxes and Fees	\$23 billion	(69%)
Federal Funds	\$10.3 billion	(31%)

Source: Building for Ohio's Next Generation. Budget of the State of Ohio. Fiscal Years 2018-2019. https://obm.ohio.gov/Budget/operating/doc/fy-18-19/enacted/FY18-19_Enacted%20Budget%20Highlights%20Book_rev%2010-2-17.pdf

Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Operating Budget



FY 2018-2019 (GRF) Appropriations

Health and Human Services and Medicaid	\$17 billion	(51%)
Education (Primary/Secondary, Higher Ed + other)	\$11.2 billion	(34%)
Justice and Public Protection	\$2.3 billion	(7%)
General government	\$900 million	(3%)

Source: Building for Ohio's Next Generation. Budget of the State of Ohio. Fiscal Years 2018-2019. https://obm.ohio.gov/Budget/operating/doc/fy-18-19/enacted/FY18-19_Enacted%20Budget%20Highlights%20Book_rev%2010-2-17.pdf

Capital Budget

With the exception of items covered in the transportation budget, the capital budget pays for construction and repair of infrastructure – capital assets such as facilities and property used by state agencies, public colleges and universities, and school districts. Funds may also be allocated for community projects of local or regional interest, such as updating water and sewage treatment plants. The capital budget, however, differs from the state operating budget in a distinct way. Capital projects generally have a high initial cost that makes them difficult to fund with current revenues. To raise the money needed to finance capital projects, the state issues bonds, taking on long-term debt it repays over time.

Bonds, which are often characterized as IOU's sold to investors, are loans made to the state. Investors put up money needed for projects and are paid back with interest, generally spreading the cost of construction across seven to 20 years and thereby making construction projects affordable. Ohio issues general obligation bonds, special obligation bonds, revenue obligation bonds, and bond-like certificates of participation. The state Office of Debt Management facilitates bond sales and repayment.

General obligation bonds can be repaid from any type of state revenue. Special obligation bonds are repaid from revenues, fees, or payments the state receives for the use of the facilities being built. Revenue obligation bonds are used by specific governmental units for specific purposes. For example, the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission issues these bonds to renovate the turnpike and pays off the bonds with toll money. A certificate of participation gives certificate buyers a share of the state's lease payments on a building or property in return for their money up front.

Budget Analysis

A number of research organizations, or “think tanks,” provide analysis of and commentary on Ohio’s budget. They are a source of useful – if sometimes partisan – information. They include the right-leaning Buckeye Institute (<https://www.buckeyeinstitute.org/>), the left-leaning Policy Matters Ohio (<https://www.policymattersohio.org/>), and the more centrist and human services-focused Center for Community Solutions (<http://www.communitysolutions.com/>). Beyond the research organizations, there are any number of advocacy groups and trade associations that examine budget issues and conduct public policy advocacy – including the League of Women Voters.

The biennial Capital Budget is prepared in line with the state's six-year Capital Improvements Plan. As with the biennial Operating Budget, the Office of Budget and Management reviews requests made by state agencies for capital projects, and the Governor's budget recommendations are introduced in the General Assembly. This bill may also include capital reappropriations, which reauthorize the appropriation of unspent funds from previously approved projects. Reappropriations allow construction to continue uninterrupted toward completion. The Capital Budget bill follows the same process as the Operating Budget for approval by the General Assembly and must be signed by the governor before the start of the fiscal biennium.

Local Government

All political power originates with the people. When the United States of America was founded, the people delegated certain powers, defined in the U.S. Constitution, to the new federal government. Those powers not specifically delegated to the federal government were reserved by the states. The states grant specific powers to local governments through state constitutions and statutes. However, some forms of local government existed in Ohio before the first state constitution was adopted in 1802.

Two features make Ohio's system of local government distinctive. One is the very strong home rule provisions for municipalities. The other is the constitutional requirement that property taxes may be assessed at no more than 1 percent of value, also referred to as 10 mills, unless approved by voters.

Ohio now has more than 3,800 separate local government units and ranks fourth among the states in the total number of units, according to Governing.com. The Ohio Constitution authorizes three major types of local government units: municipality, county and township. A fourth type in use in Ohio is the special district, such as school districts, discussed in the next chapter, or health districts, discussed below. State law permits local officials to create special districts or requires a vote of residents of the district.

Understanding Home Rule

Article 18 of the Ohio Constitution grants certain powers to municipalities. The General Assembly cannot interfere with powers granted to municipal corporations by the Ohio Constitution unless the Constitution sanctions their interference. On the other hand, municipal laws cannot be in conflict with laws passed by the General Assembly. Municipal "home rule" powers include the power of local self-government, the exercise of certain police powers, and the ownership and operation of public utilities beyond its borders.

Municipalities

Ten city governments were organized under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. After passage of the first constitution, cities were chartered individually with special

laws passed for each one. This procedure wasted legislative time and gave different treatment to the various municipalities. The 1851 constitution prohibited special legislation and required the General Assembly to pass general laws governing organization of all cities and villages. After passage of these laws, cities pressed for legislation that would enable them to meet the special needs of their people. This resulted in 11 different classifications of cities based on population. The Ohio Supreme Court declared this system unconstitutional in 1902.

The General Assembly responded by adopting a new municipal code with only two classifications of municipalities. But pressure by large cities for more flexibility continued, and in 1912 the people approved the present Article XVIII of the constitution, which allows municipal corporations to have home rule power.

The constitution and Ohio Revised Code Section 7 specify the form and powers of municipalities in Ohio. In general, Ohio municipalities provide the services usually associated with local government: police and fire protection, water supply, traffic control, public health regulation and sanitation. Municipal corporations are classified as cities if their population exceeds 5,000; otherwise an incorporated municipality is called a village. The secretary of state declares the status of a municipality as a city or a village following the federal decennial census.

Municipalities may be organized by any of three alternative methods: (1) according to provisions of the general laws, (2) according to the optional plan laws or (3) by a home rule charter.

The general laws provide for the mayor-council form of government. In this form the mayor is the chief executive officer and a council, varying in size with the size of the municipality, is the legislative body. Several other executive officers are elected and the mayor appoints the heads of the other executive departments. There is a difference between the prescribed form for an incorporated village and for a city, although both might be considered “weak mayor” forms of government with executive authority divided between the mayor and either a commission or other elected officials.

The optional plan laws provide for specific variations of each of the three basic forms of government. These are the mayor-council form; the council-manager form, in which an elected council determines general policy and appoints a manager to administer it; and the commission form, in which executive and legislative functions are combined in one elected body. An optional plan must be approved by the electors. This alternative has never been used extensively in Ohio, probably because home rule charters were made possible at the same time.

“Any municipality can frame and adopt or amend a charter for its government and . . . exercise thereunder all powers of local self-government,” according to Article XVIII, Section 7, of the Ohio Constitution. Under this home rule authority, cities and villages may adopt charters that vary their form of government from those

offered under the general and optional plan laws. A proposal to frame a charter may be submitted to the electors by either a two-thirds vote of the legislative authority of the municipality or upon petition of 10 percent of the electors.

Voters decide whether they want a charter to be drawn at either a general or special election. In the same election, electors vote for the 15 charter commissioners who will write the charter if the issue passes. The commission must submit the proposed charter to the voters within a year of its election. If a majority of voters approve it, the charter becomes effective. Home rule charters may vary as to council size, method of election, number of executive officers and departments, etc., to meet the needs and wishes of the community. About two-thirds of Ohio's cities operate under home rule charters.

Powers

In addition to providing flexibility in the form of government, the 1912 amendment gave home rule powers to municipalities. Home rule means simply the authority to govern your own affairs. The home rule amendment granted this power to all municipalities regardless of size. Both charter and non-charter municipalities have home rule power, although court decisions have tended to grant more power to charter municipalities than to non-charter municipalities.

Section 3 of Article XVIII says: Municipalities shall have authority to exercise all powers of local self-government and to adopt and enforce within their limits such local police, sanitary, and other similar regulations as are not in conflict with general laws. Since 1912 the meaning of this section has been tested hundreds of times in the courts to determine which are municipal powers and which are state powers.

Generally, municipalities have full power over the internal operation of their municipal government — the departments, boards, commissions and so on. In addition, they have the authority to regulate the behavior of their citizens, provided these regulations are not in conflict with state laws. State law takes precedence over municipal ordinance in any area that could be considered to affect the health and welfare of all citizens; for example, municipalities have little ordinance power over the regulation of fireworks.

Other sections of the constitution state that the General Assembly may pass laws limiting the powers of municipalities to levy taxes or incur debt and that municipal electors have initiative and referendum power over municipal ordinances. Municipal corporations may appropriate property for public use and may sell any excess so acquired; assess property that benefits from local improvements so owners pay taxes for such improvements; and own and operate a public utility, sell up to 50 percent of the product of the utility outside its own corporation limits (water and sewer services are not subject to the limitation) and issue mortgage bonds to acquire or extend the utility.

In addition to the services mentioned earlier, municipalities may provide municipal electric power, heat, libraries, hospitals and places of correction; and public landings, wharves, docks and piers. They may establish and care for streets, regulate vehicles and the use of streets, impound animals, provide for refuse disposal and regulate weights and measures such as gas pumps and taxi meters. Municipalities may construct the necessary buildings for police and fire use, purchase fire engines or boats, build airports, provide off-street parking, rehabilitate blighted areas and build limited access highways or freeways. Municipalities may plan for the development and use of all land within the city limits and may implement this plan through zoning regulations. All these specific powers are included under the general grant of power by the constitution.

Incorporating and Dissolving

New villages can be formed when the majority of landowners in the area to be incorporated petition the county commissioners. The commissioners must then hold hearings. Commissioners cannot allow the incorporation if the territory involved is within three miles of an existing municipal corporation unless that municipality approves or has already rejected annexing the territory. The area of the proposed village must be at least two square miles, have a population of 800 persons per square mile and have an assessed property valuation of at least \$3,500 per person. A special provision is included in state law that permits a township area with a population of 25,000 or greater to incorporate as a city even though the proposed incorporation would include territory within three miles of an existing municipality. Electors must approve the proposal to incorporate as a city.

As mentioned earlier, a village automatically becomes a city if the federal decennial census says the population is 5,000 or more and the secretary of state then declares it a city. Residents may dissolve a village as a corporation if 40 percent of its electors petition for it and a majority of voters support the move at an election called to consider the question.

The County

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided the basis for organization of 10 counties in Ohio. The number of counties increased rapidly after adoption of the first constitution in 1802 until the last of the present counties was organized in 1851.

Ohio's 88 counties vary in size from 228 square miles (Lake County) to 702 (Ashtabula County), and in population, according to 2017 U.S. Census Bureau estimates, from 13,092 (Vinton County) to 1.29 million (Franklin County). The state created the county to serve as an agency administering state law and functions, including justice, human services, elections, maintenance of land records, and tax collection. The major difference between counties and municipalities is that a municipality is created by the state upon request of the people living within it for

their interest, convenience and advantage while counties are created by the state, without the consent of the people, in order to carry out state policy. A municipality is a stronger form of government in Ohio since all municipalities are granted home rule power by the constitution.

Form and Powers

County government structure is clearly outlined by state law unless county electors have adopted a home rule charter or approved a form of government under the alternative forms law. Most counties in the state are organized under the general law, except Summit County, which adopted a charter form of government in 1979, followed by Cuyahoga County in 2009.

The General Assembly has prescribed a commission form of government for Ohio counties, headed by a three-member board of county commissioners elected to overlapping four-year terms. The commissioners make and execute policy in the county. Except for Summit and Cuyahoga counties, there is no elected county executive head, although commissioners may appoint an administrator. Commissioners share the executive function of the county with eight other independent county officers: auditor, clerk of courts, coroner, engineer, prosecutor, recorder, sheriff and treasurer. These officials, who are also elected by the people to four-year terms, are technically the equals of the commissioners. But commissioners can exert influence over them through their control of the county budget.

The commissioners are responsible for the county's financial management as well as facilities maintenance, personnel administration and economic development. They approve the annual budget and determine tax levies for county purposes and bond issues for county capital improvements. They may also grant tax abatements. They may buy and sell land and buildings; manage real and county personal property, which includes motor vehicles, tools and office equipment; and provide necessary county buildings. They approve annexations and municipal incorporation and, in some counties, are responsible for rural zoning. They have a wide range of human service responsibilities, including the administration of federal and state workforce investment programs.

County departments under their control usually include building regulation and inspection, purchasing, budget, sanitation engineering, human services and dog warden. Commissioners are responsible for

Why 88 Counties?

When Ohio was established, the early state leaders wanted to ensure that the government was accessible to the citizenry. Each of the 88 counties was created with a county seat no more than one day's journey on horseback from anywhere in the county.

managing solid waste, storm water drainage and ditch improvements.

Although counties originally existed strictly as state administrative agencies, they are now developing quasi-municipal functions, with the approval of the state. The state increased the scope of county powers by granting commissioners the authority to enter into agreements with a municipality, special district, township or another taxing authority to perform any service provided by that body. The flexibility possible under this power can provide a means of delivering services, such as water or waste management, more efficiently and economically.

Ohio law specifies the duties of the county officers. The **auditor** determines the tax value of property, maintains county financial records and issues warrants for payment of county obligations. The **treasurer** collects current and delinquent taxes in the county and its subdivisions, invests the county's funds and disburses funds to schools, townships and other government agencies. The **recorder** records deeds, mortgages, plats, liens and other written instruments.

The **prosecutor** is the chief legal officer of the county, investigating and prosecuting crimes committed within the county. The prosecutor also acts as attorney in defending the county in court and giving legal advice to county agencies and townships. The **coroner** determines the cause of death of persons dying in a violent or suspicious manner and issues death certificates. The **sheriff** is the chief law enforcement officer and custodian of the county jail while also providing services to the courts.

The **engineer** is responsible for the construction, maintenance and repair of all bridges in the county, county roads and other public improvements except buildings. The **clerk of courts** maintains records, enters judgments and collects court costs for the appellate and common pleas courts. The clerk also issues and transfers automobile and watercraft certificates of title.

Other Forms of County Government

A constitutional amendment adopted in 1933 and modified in 1978 gives the people of a county the right to adopt a home rule charter. The charter outlines the form of government, the officers to be elected, and the procedure for performing state-mandated duties. It may provide for organization of the county as a municipal corporation and for municipal powers to be exercised by the county.

A charter commission elected by the people frames the charter and submits it for a vote; or citizens may, by initiative petition, submit a charter to the electors. The charter needs only a majority vote unless the charter gives the county exclusive use of a municipal power. In that case it must be approved by majorities of the voters in all of the following: a) in the county, b) in the largest municipality, c) in the county outside the largest municipality and d) in a majority of the combined total of municipalities and townships of the county. The fourth majority is not required in counties with a population of 500,000 or greater.

By popular vote in November 1979, Summit County became the first of Ohio's 88 counties to adopt a home rule charter. Cuyahoga County voters adopted a similar charter in 2009. The charters, placed on the ballot by citizen initiative, replaced the three-member board of commissioners with an elected county executive and county council.

The constitution also gives the state legislature authority to provide by general law alternative forms of county government for adoption by the people. A law passed in 1961 and considerably strengthened in 1967, permits counties to have an elected or appointed county chief executive and to vary the size and method of election of the commission. The government may create finance, personnel and law departments and exercise all powers implied by state law, provided there is no conflict with municipalities. But none of the other eight elected county officers can be eliminated. The people must approve a proposal for an alternative form by a majority vote.

County Boards and Commissions

The number of boards and commissions in any county varies according to the needs of that particular county. The County Budget Commission, composed of the auditor, treasurer and county prosecutor, has the responsibility for reviewing the tax budgets of all subdivisions in the county to be sure they comply with the Ohio Constitution and statutes. The commission is described in more detail on page 85.

The auditor, treasurer and president of the board of county commissioners make up the Board of Revision, which hears and investigates complaints relating to the valuation or assessment of real property. The board may revise assessments. Appeals from its decisions may be filed in common pleas court or with the State Board of Tax Appeals.

State law also prescribes county boards of alcohol, drug addiction and mental health; elections, health, children's services, developmental disabilities, planning and zoning.

Townships

Townships were first laid out in Ohio according to the basic policy for the survey and sale of public lands established by Congress in the Articles of Confederation in 1785. This system of townships, six miles square subdivided into sections one mile square, has been used in surveying most public land ever since. After the first Ohio Constitution was adopted, the legislature tended to follow the original survey lines in creating townships. The present 1,309 townships in Ohio are divisions within the counties. All land areas not incorporated into municipalities lie within the jurisdiction of a township.

The constitution specifies that township government is comprised of a three-member elected board of trustees and a township clerk. The board and clerk manage townships but can only exercise those powers specifically delegated to

them by the General Assembly. A township may engage in economic development, grant tax abatements, buy and sell land and adopt noise, animal, right-of-way and weed-control regulations.

All townships begin as “basic” townships. They are required to provide basic services to their residents. The care and maintenance of the township road system is the largest function of townships today. Townships are responsible for 44,000 miles of roadway in Ohio, more than the counties, municipalities, and state. They also provide fire and police protection, emergency medical services, parks and recreation, zoning and cemetery management. Township trustees also have responsibilities for line fences between adjacent properties, ditches, drains and culverts.

Recently, the General Assembly created “limited home rule” townships. When a township has reached a population of 5,000, the citizens can elect to adopt a limited form of self-government, including funding a sheriff and prosecuting attorney. This limited home rule provision gives township government expanded local legislative authority and more power to enforce township resolutions. Townships with a population between 5,000 and 14,999 must submit the question of limited home rule to electors of the township for approval. Townships with a population exceeding 15,000 may submit the question to the electors of the township or the trustees can adopt limited home rule by a unanimous vote.

Residents, however, may contest a trustee vote to adopt limited home rule and put the issue before voters by submitting a petition to the township trustees. This petition must include signatures equal to 10 percent of the number of citizens in the township who voted for governor in the last gubernatorial election. Those townships that adopted limited home rule by unanimous vote of the trustees and have a population exceeding 15,000 are designated “urban townships.” Urban townships have the power to adopt regulations managing access to township roads in unincorporated areas in addition to other limited home rule authorities.

Financing Local Government

The state constitution and state law define the system of taxation used to finance the nearly 3,800 local governmental units in Ohio.

Administration

The county auditor, under supervision of the state Department of Taxation, is responsible for valuations of real property in each county. Real property in Ohio is taxed at 35 percent of its true market value. Reappraisals of property valuations are made every six years and updated every three years. The valuations of public utilities and businesses are certified to the county by the state tax commissioner.

The taxing authority of each local government establishes local budgets and tax rates. This authority prepares an estimate of income and expenditures for the following year and sets a tentative tax rate. Public hearings are held, and the budget must be adopted by July 15 and filed with the auditor by July 20. These budgets are

reviewed by the County Budget Commission to ascertain if tax levies are properly authorized. The budget commission adjusts tax rates as necessary and sets a final legal tax rate for each local government.

The commission sends a list of rates to the treasurer, who bills taxpayers twice a year and distributes tax funds to local governmental units twice a year.

The County Budget Commission allocates portions of the Local Government Fund (LGF) to counties, municipalities and townships according to statutory formulas. This fund transfers a percentage of revenues from state sales, income, and corporation franchise taxes to local governments. Local governments may challenge commission decisions by filing an appeal with the State Board of Tax Appeals and from there to the Ohio Supreme Court.

Sources of Funds

State law limits how local governments collect and disburse funds. Counties and municipalities have been granted the authority to impose a broad range of taxes by the General Assembly. Townships have limited taxing authority.

Certain revenue funds must be spent on particular services. These are known as “earmarked,” restricted or special-purpose funds. Other funds that are collected can be spent at the discretion of the local government. These funds are known as discretionary funds or general-purpose funds.

Taxes constitute the largest revenue source for local governments. Additionally, governments generate revenue from fees and licenses, fines and court costs. Local government units may also be eligible for various state and federal monies for specific programs. Some taxes are levied directly by the local government, while others are state-imposed taxes that are returned to the local level by the state government.

COUNTY

The real property tax is the largest single source of local revenue. It is paid on real estate and public utility property. The Ohio Constitution allows local government to impose a personal property tax of up to ten mills, known as “inside millage.” Local governing bodies can also place a tax levy on the ballot for citizens residing in that governmental unit to consider. This is known as “outside millage.”

Most levies are subject to the property tax reduction factor, an anti-inflationary measure enacted through HB920 in 1976. This adjustment on the tax rate of a levy is

What’s a Mill?

A mill is a unit of measurement used in calculating the tax rate for some taxes based on property or net worth.

A mill is one tenth of a penny. A mill produces \$1 in tax revenue for every \$1,000 of the taxable value of the property or net worth against which it is levied.

designed to keep the tax revenues counties as well as municipalities, school districts and other taxing authorities receive — and the amount property owners pay — stable over the life of the levy. To do this, the tax rate, known as effective mills, is increased when property values decline or decreased when property values increase. The tax reduction factor does not apply to levies that raise a specific amount of revenue, such as an emergency levy.

Property tax revenue generated by inside millage is deposited in the general-purpose fund. Revenue generated by outside millage must be deposited in the special purpose fund for which the levy was passed.

Counties generate further general-purpose funds by levying a county sales tax. The county sales tax is in addition to the sales tax levied by the state. County sales tax rates range from an additional .025 percent to 2.0 percent. Both the state and county sales taxes are collected at the same time, and the state returns the county portion to the county from which it was collected.

Other major sources of tax revenue include motor vehicle license tax, real estate transfer tax, lodging tax and the manufactured home tax.

MUNICIPALITIES

Taxes are a major source of revenue for municipalities, but not all tax revenue is collected by the municipality itself. The county and state collect various taxes on behalf of the municipality and share the revenues according to statutory requirements.

The county assesses and collects property taxes from county residents and businesses. The county treasurer returns a portion of the tax revenues to the municipalities within the county.

Portions of certain taxes levied by the state are returned to municipalities. The Local Government Fund disburses state-levied sales, income, commercial activity and public utility excise taxes to municipalities. Municipalities received \$708.5 million from the LGF in 2009, the state appropriated \$394.2 million for 2019. Municipalities also receive a portion of the state-levied motor vehicle license fee. State gasoline taxes are returned based on the number of registered drivers residing in the municipality. Municipalities benefit from several other taxes, including the house trailer tax and the grain handling tax. These taxes represent only a small portion of the total revenue. The state shares revenue generated from certain licenses and permits,

Property Values and Taxes

Example: A school district that levies a 23 mill property tax in an area that has an average property valuation of \$100,000 will raise twice as much revenue as a school district that levies a 23 mill property tax in an area that has an average property valuation of \$50,000.

such as pawnbroker licenses and liquor permits.

Municipalities raise further revenue through local taxes and fees. Municipalities are permitted to impose an income tax on all income earned within their boundaries and by their residents.

A one percent tax may be levied by resolution of council. Higher rates require the approval of voters. A hotel/motel tax of three percent can be enacted to fund a convention and visitor's bureau or a sports facility.

Municipalities can assess fees for court costs, parking meters, inspection services, building permits, public utilities, and licenses. These fees are levied primarily to cover administrative costs.

TOWNSHIPS

Townships have limited authority to generate income. However, townships can assess fees for township contracts, permits, and services. The majority of township revenue comes from inside millage and other property taxes levied by the township for services provided. State funds, including those from the LGF make up another portion, which has largely declined over the past decade. Townships receive funds from the motor vehicle fuel tax, motor vehicle license tax and the estate tax.

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

County, municipal and township governments disburse their revenues to pay for the services, discussed earlier, that each provides.

HEALTH DISTRICTS

Health districts are local government organizations that provide direct health services mandated by the Ohio Department of Health. The state is divided into health districts according to the type of local government and population. Each city is designated a city health district and multiple cities may join to become one city district. Villages and unincorporated areas within a county form a general health district. Cities may join with a general health district and form a combined health district in order to provide health services more economically and efficiently. As of 2018, there were a total of 116 health districts.

While they may share geographical boundaries, health districts in Ohio are not under direct control by a county commission or city administration. But county, city and other local elected officials do have influence. In general districts, the health advisory council includes an elected official from every political subdivision: the president of the county board of commissioners or county executive, village mayors or chief executives and chairpersons of boards of township trustees in the county. The council can advise the health district and appoints the board of health members who set policy and oversee operations. This unique arrangement was formalized in state law immediately after the great influenza epidemic of 1918.

In city districts, the mayor or other chief executive appoints the board of health members with the approval of the city council. In combined districts, the members

decide how board members are chosen

Ohio defines health departments as the operational entities of health districts. As of 2017 there were 114 local health departments, providing services to the state's city, general and combined health districts.

With a few exceptions permitted by city charters, each health department is governed by its board of health. The boards of health must implement the services mandated by the Ohio Department of Health as well as meet the unique needs of the population in their respective health districts. The board of health is responsible for hiring a health commissioner, who is responsible for directing the department's services. Most boards are composed of five members appointed for five-year terms, but combined health departments set numbers of board members and terms according to their contracts.

Funding

Federal money is a major source of local health department funding. The money includes grants to local health departments for special programs and block grants that are channeled through the Ohio Department of Health. The Maternal and Child Health Block Grant and the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant are significant federal block grants currently in use in Ohio.

Nearly 75 percent of funding for health services are local funds raised through property taxes and fees, according to the Association of Ohio Health commissioners. Health districts submit their budget to their respective governing bodies for approval.

The state provides local health departments that meet optimal standards established by the Public Health Council with a small subsidy and other funds for specific health programs. This subsidy has remained at approximately 32 cents per resident for the past two decades.

If all other funding sources prove inadequate to pay for necessary general public health programs, the county board of health may request up to a one mill levy.

OTHER SPECIAL DISTRICTS

State law has authorized the creation of a variety of special districts to serve specific governmental purposes. A special district can be created by state or local government and has an independent budget and means of financing. It is established in response to a need for a specific service not offered already within the boundaries of an existing governmental unit. Each type of special district is authorized by a separate law; districts are usually single-purpose.

The chart on pages 89 to 91 shows the types of districts in use in Ohio, their method of establishment and financing and the appointment of their governing bodies.

Special Districts

Type and Purpose	Creation	Governing Body	Financing
Conservancy Districts (flood control, water supply, sewage disposal)	Petition of landowners or governing bodies to common pleas court	Appointed by common pleas court	Issues bonds, assessments
Joint Township Hospital Districts	Boards of trustees of participating townships	All members of boards of township trustees	County and township appropriations; trustees may levy a tax with voter approval
County Library Districts	County commissioners and referendum	Appointed by county common pleas court and county commissioners	State general funds; property tax levies, bonds with voter approval
Regional Library Districts	Joint resolution of commissioners of two or more counties	Appointed by the county commissioners of participating counties	State public library fund; issue bonds with voter approval
Major River Watershed Districts	Counties file map/ description with Ohio EPA and secretary of state	Appointed by county commissioners, board of directors representing the public, water suppliers and major users	State general funds; property tax levies, bonds with voter approval
Joint Ambulance Districts	Resolution municipal and township governing bodies	Selected by participants' governing bodies	Charges; levy property taxes and bonds with voter approval
Joint Fire Districts	Petition of landowners or governing bodies to common pleas court	Selected by participants' governing bodies	Issues bonds, assessments

Special Districts continued

Joint Fire and Ambulance Districts	Joint resolution of municipal and township governing bodies	Selected by participants' governing bodies	Levy property taxes with voter approval; charges for ambulance municipal and township governing bodies
Park Districts	Petition of electors or governing bodies to probate judge	Appointed by probate judges	Issue bonds, assessment; levy tax with voter approval
Township Park Districts	Common pleas court on petition of electors to township trustees and referendum	Appointed by common pleas court or by board of trustees	Grants, user fees; levy property taxes and issue bonds with voter approval
Port Authorities	Ordinance or resolution of municipality, township, county or combination	Appointed as determined by agreement of participating government bodies	Service charge; levy property taxes and issue bonds with voter approval
Regional Airport Authorities	Resolution of county commissioners of one or more counties	As described in the resolution creating the authority	Issue revenue bonds; rental and service charges
Regional Arts and Cultural Districts	Resolution or ordinance of governing bodies of two or more counties, cities or townships	Appointed by governing bodies of participants or board of county commissioners	Grants and service fees; issue general obligation bonds; levy property taxes and bonds with voter approval

Special Districts continued

Regional Transit Authorities (provide facilities for ground, air and water transportation)	Resolution or ordinance by the governing bodies of the participating county or two or more counties, cities or townships or combination	Appointed by the governing bodies as described in the resolution or ordinance creating the authority	Grants, service fees, rentals; issue general obligation bonds; levy property and/or sales tax with voter approval
Regional Water and Sewer Districts (provide water supply, sewage disposal)	Common pleas court upon petition of one or more townships, municipalities or counties	Selected in manner determined by each district	Service fees, assessments; issue bonds and levy taxes with voter approval
Regional Solid Waste Management Districts	Resolution of one or more counties after approval from municipalities and townships within	Appointed by governing bodies of participants	Service fees; issue revenue bonds
Sanitary Districts	Petition of one or more municipalities or counties to common pleas court	Appointed by common pleas court	Service charges, assessments; issue bonds
Soil and Water Conservation Districts	Mandatory in each county	Elected board of supervisors	Donations, gifts, assessments, state aid; county and local tax levies with voter approval
Transportation Improvement Districts	Resolution of a board of county commissioners	Appointed as described in the resolution creating the district	Federal and state aid, assessment, service fees; issue revenue bonds
Joint Solid Waste Management Districts	Resolution or agreement of boards of county commissioners	Boards of county commissioners	Service fees; issue revenue bonds

Local Schools

State governments are responsible for the organization, management and financial support of primary and secondary education in the United States.

In Ohio, the General Assembly has delegated most of the day-to-day operations of schools to independent government units. In 2017, there were 1.7 million students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 in 610 city, local, and exempted village school districts; 49 joint vocational school districts; approximately 370 community schools (also known as charter schools); the Ohio School for the Blind and the Ohio School for the Deaf. There are also 52 educational service centers, which provide leadership, technical assistance and other services to member school districts and community schools

Governance

School districts and educational service centers are governed by nonpartisan elected boards. Board members are elected to four-year overlapping terms. The few current exceptions are in Cleveland, Youngstown and Lorain. The Cleveland mayor appoints the board of education for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and that board appoints a chief executive officer, with the concurrence of the mayor. Youngstown City Schools and Lorain City Schools are the first and second school districts in the state declared to be in “academic emergency.” While under the declaration, the districts are governed by an academic distress commission appointed by the state Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The governing boards of joint vocational school districts are appointed by the boards of education of the member school districts. The community school equivalent is a governing authority typically made up of trustees who developed the school. New start-up community schools have at least five individuals on their governing authorities. Conversion community schools, which are created from existing traditional schools but operate independently, have three individuals on their governing authorities.

Elected boards and governing boards or authorities are generally responsible for hiring a superintendent or chief academic officer, teachers and other necessary personnel; oversight of facilities, equipment and educational materials; and policy-making, including the approval of an annual budget. The boards of school districts, joint vocational school districts and educational service centers can propose taxes for their schools’ support. Community schools do not have taxing authority.

Financing Schools

Funding for primary and secondary education is addressed in Article VI Section 2 of the Ohio Constitution, which says, “The General Assembly shall make such provisions, by taxation or otherwise, as, with the income arising from the school trust fund, will secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the state.”

Funding Ohio’s school districts is a shared responsibility between state government and local boards of education, with some support from the federal government. Based on the latest data from FY2015, the percent of revenue allocated to public schools in Ohio, including community schools, was 43.3 percent from the state, 49.6 percent from local communities and 7.1 percent from the federal government.

Federal funds are distributed to states through laws such as the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2015*, also known as the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, which supports disadvantaged students, teacher and principal training, homeless students, students of military families, school improvement and more. Federal funds also support special education, the National School Lunch Program, career technical education and more.

State Funding

State aid for school districts is calculated and distributed through the School Foundation Program. Every school district participates in the program. To qualify, a school district must levy a minimum of 20 mills (which is .02 of total assessed valuation) for current operating expenses, including any joint vocational school operating millage; meet the minimum hours of operation in which students are in attendance and comply with state laws.

The General Assembly determines the distribution formula, which is included in the state’s biennial operating budget in odd numbered years. While most of the state funds are allocated from the state’s General Revenue Fund (GRF), funds are also allocated from the state lottery fund (SLF); dedicated purpose funds (DPF); and internal service activity (ISA).

Within the FY18-19 budget, funding for the Ohio Department of Education is \$11.16 billion in FY18 and \$11.3 billion in FY19. This represents 43.8 percent of total state appropriations. Close to 98 percent of the funds allocated to the Ohio Department of Education are distributed to schools. The estimated total funding for school districts increased from \$8.003 billion in FY17 to \$8.075 billion in FY18, and will increase to \$8.165 billion in FY19. Lottery profits are projected to reach \$1.1 billion each year of the biennium, which represents about 10.4 percent of schools’ spending in FY18 and 10.2 percent in FY19.

School districts also receive reimbursement payments or credits from the state for lost revenue from changes in Ohio tax policies, such as the elimination of the

tangible personal property tax, and for tax relief programs, such as the homestead exemption program. Since 2013, however, the state no longer reimburses school districts for the residential 2.5 percent and general 10 percent roll backs on locally levied property taxes.

The first School Foundation Program was adopted by the General Assembly in 1935. The current school funding formula has continued to evolve over the past biennial budgets, but still provides school districts a basic amount of state aid. This “core opportunity aid,” is multiplied by student enrollment. That amount is adjusted for each school district based on its capacity to raise local revenue, including property wealth and income wealth — factors used to calculate the state share index, or SSI. The purpose of the formula is to provide school districts with lower property values and personal income with more state aid than school districts with higher property values and personal income.

The foundation program includes funding for core opportunity aid; targeted assistance and capacity aid, which provide additional funds to school districts with low property values and low income; the K-3 literacy initiative; economically disadvantaged students; students with limited English proficiency funding; gifted students; transportation; special education and career-technical education.

The formula includes the Transitional Aid Guarantee that assures school districts will not lose state aid from year to year unless they have lost enrollment, but also applies a gain cap, limiting the amount of state aid increases that a school district can receive, even when enrollment increases.

While lawmakers increased the per-student core opportunity grant in July 2017 from \$6,000 in FY17 to \$6,010 in FY18 and \$6,020 in FY19, other changes in the formula offset the revenue increases. Out of the 610 school districts, 221 were flat-funded, 147 lost funding compared to 2017 and 242 school districts gained between 0.1 percent to 5.9 percent in funding in FY18-19.

The General Assembly’s funding for school districts has varied over time, but over the past decade, cuts and inflation have reduced state aid to schools. According to Policy Matters Ohio, state funding for schools, adjusted for inflation, has decreased an estimated 7.6 percent between 2010 and 2019.

Local Funding

Local boards of education adopt annual budgets, which allocate state funds and locally-raised tax revenue to support their education programs. School districts also receive funds from casino revenue, grants, student fees, rental/sale of property, gifts and donations.

Although the Ohio Constitution delegates to the General Assembly the authority to provide a “thorough and efficient system of public schools,” local communities have provided funds to support education since the adoption of the Land Ordinance of 1785.

School districts raise revenue for elementary and secondary education programs locally through taxes on real property and public utility tangible property, and through a school district income tax.

Real Property Tax: Real property includes buildings and land owned by businesses and individuals, and is assessed at 35 percent of its market value. Real property includes residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial and other types of property. Total assessed valuation per pupil, which is the real property wealth of a school district divided by the number of students in a district, is one way to determine the capacity of a school district to raise local revenue. In Tax Year 2017 the Campbell Local School District in Mahoning County had the lowest taxable property value of \$49,518 per student, while the Genoa Area Local School District in Ottawa County had the third highest taxable valuation of \$866,746 per student. Kelley’s Island and Put-In-Bay had the highest valuations, because they have very low enrollments.

The tax rate applied to real property is measured in millages or “mills,” as explained on page 85. Statewide, school districts receive revenue generated from between 2 to 8 inside mills. Inside mills can grow with inflation when property values increase due to reappraisals.

School districts have a variety of options to raise outside mills, depending on the use of the revenue. A general levy raises revenue for operating expenses or permanent improvements. An emergency levy is limited to 10 years and raises a specific amount of revenue. A bond issue raises revenue for school construction. Other levy types include capital improvement levy, dual-purpose levy, county financing district levy (which is used by educational service centers), incremental levy and growth levy. The property tax reduction factor discussed in the previous chapter applies to most levies but not those that raise a specific amount of revenue, such as an emergency levy.

Ohio school districts raised approximately \$10 billion on property valued at \$254 billion through operating levies, including emergency levies and joint vocational school operating levies in FY2017.

School District Income Tax: School districts, with voter approval, can also raise revenue through a school district income tax. Boards of education can propose one of two types. For a traditional tax base, the board may levy a tax on the income of school district residents and estates of decedents. For an earned income tax base, the board levies a tax only on earned income and self-employment income of residents, while it excludes income from interest, dividends, capital gains and pensions.

Of the 610 school districts, 193 employed school district income taxes, raising a total of \$426 million in FY2017.

Casino Revenue: School districts, community schools, vocational schools, and

educational service centers in Ohio also receive funds from the County Student Fund, which includes 34 percent of the taxes raised from Ohio's four casinos. The revenue is distributed to schools based on student enrollment. The amount distributed in FY17 was \$89.4 million.

Community Schools: Community schools are state-funded nonsectarian, nonprofit schools that are exempt from some state laws and administrative rules that traditional public schools must follow. The 122nd General Assembly authorized these charter schools under Chapter 3314 of the Ohio Revised Code, in 1997. The first community schools in Ohio opened in the 1998-1999 school year.

The state categorizes community schools as conversion schools or start-up schools. These schools can be "site based schools" or "internet-based schools." They serve specific populations of students, such as students in special education programs, students in gifted education programs, and students in dropout recovery programs; and they can focus on a specific curriculum, such as the arts. In the 2016-2017 school year, 362 community schools served 111,272 students, or about 7 percent of total student enrollment in public schools in Ohio. Enrollment in community schools reached its peak at 120,893 students in 2013-2014 and has been declining since, according to state records.

Aspects of community schools are controversial. The Coalition for Public Education filed a lawsuit, *Ohio Congress of Parents and Teachers, et. al.*, in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, challenging the constitutionality of community schools, in 2001. The League of Women Voters was part of the coalition.

The lawsuit alleged that the state's community school program violated the state constitution because community schools were not held to the same standards as public schools, were not administered by elected boards of education and local property taxes were being diverted to private operators of community schools without voter approval. The suit also alleged that the state had failed to enforce current laws governing community schools and had allowed private schools to convert to community schools in violation of state law.

After several lower court rulings, the Ohio Supreme Court decided that the state law authorizing the establishment and operation of community schools is constitutional, by a 4-3 margin in 2006. Since then, several other lawsuits have been filed regarding various actions of community school personnel, sponsors, boards, teachers, management companies, and more. Members of the Coalition for Public Education have worked with legislators to strengthen charter school law.

In 2018, site-based community school payments included funding for the core opportunity grant; targeted assistance; additional state aid for special education and related services; the K-3 Literacy Fund; economically disadvantaged students; limited English proficient students; career technical education; and the transportation fund, for community schools providing transportation (few do).

State funding for internet-based community schools is limited to core opportunity grant funding, additional state aid for special education and related services, and career technical education.

However, community school funding is not straightforward and remains controversial. Ohio counts community school students as members of the school district in which they live. The state then deducts payments from each student's residential district foundation account and directs the payments to the community school the student attends. The state relies on community schools to report student enrollment and deducts money from the residential district monthly.

As explained earlier, the state pays each school district a core opportunity grant amount that has been lowered by the state share index (SSI). But the state deducts and pays each community school the full core opportunity grant per student without applying SSI. That means that more money is taken away from school district state accounts than the districts receive for each community school student. The result is that the state pays more per community school student in each given district than it pays per public school student in the district.

In the Columbus City Schools district, the state school funding contribution was about \$3,900 per student but the state took away \$7,800 per community school student, according to a 2015 report by the left-leaning think tank Innovation Ohio. The loss dropped per-pupil state funding to the students who remained in Columbus Public Schools to \$2,604.

Community school supporters argue the funding system is fair because community schools can't raise local taxes. Supporters of traditional districts argue that the districts not only have less money to support their students but that local taxes they raise to fill in for the lost state money are in reality subsidizing community schools.

This method of funding community schools has been criticized for its lack of transparency. The total state aid reported for school districts is higher than the actual amount that the school district receives from the state, because it includes funds that are transferred to community schools and voucher programs; and the total cost for operating community schools is not directly reported or itemized in the state's biennial budget.

In FY18-19, \$2 billion will be deducted from school district revenue and transferred to community schools.

Other ways the state supports community schools include:

- If a community or private school does not provide transportation but the district has a transportation system, Ohio requires the student's residential district to transport the student and pay the cost
- Paying the school an amount per student for facilities expenses
- Providing loans to purchase or renovate facilities through the Ohio

Community School Classroom Facilities Loan Guarantee Program, operated by the Ohio Facilities Commission.

- Providing funding through Community School Classroom Facilities grants

Community schools, college preparatory boarding schools, and STEM schools have the right of first refusal to lease or buy unused public school facilities. School districts must give priority to high performing community schools and STEM schools meeting certain conditions to purchase or lease unused public school facilities.

From 1998 to 2018, 614 community schools have opened and 294 have closed, according to the Department of Education.

Voucher Programs: The 121st Ohio General Assembly enacted into law the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program (CSP) in 1995, after many failed attempts during the early 1990s to approve a voucher law. This program provides public funds for students in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District to attend private schools or schools in other school districts, or receive funds for tutoring.

Coalitions of education and advocacy organizations challenged the law as unconstitutional and won in the Ohio Supreme Court in 1999. The General Assembly quickly passed the program in another bill that year, which was immediately met with court challenges from the same coalition.

The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio and the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the program violated the separation of church and state created by the Establishment Clause in the First Amendment to the Constitution. At that time over 80 percent of participating private schools had a religious affiliation.

The state appealed and the U.S. Supreme Court overruled the lower courts by a 5-4 decision in 2002. The majority said the program has a valid secular purpose, state funds go to parents and not the schools, the program covers a broad class of beneficiaries, the program is neutral with respect to religion and the program provides adequate nonreligious options.

Since that decision, the General Assembly has approved four additional voucher programs: the Autism Scholarship Program (2003), EdChoice (2005), the Jon Peterson Special Education Scholarship (2011) and the Educational Choice Expansion Program (2013). Students enrolled in these programs must take pertinent state exams to maintain eligibility.

Ohio lawmakers also passed a law authorizing the opening of a boarding school for at-risk students, which is also financed by public funds, but so far no school has opened.

In 2016, Ohio's voucher programs served 39,904 students, leaving at least 21,000 unused vouchers, and cost \$236 million. The state deducts funding for EdChoice, the Autism Scholarship Program, and the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program from the school district of the voucher recipient. The state created a

dedicated fund for the CSP. The EdChoice Expansion program is directly funded by the state based on student enrollment, but is limited to \$38.4 million in FY18 and \$47.7 million in FY19.

The maximum amount the state pays for student scholarships under CSP and EdChoice is \$4,650 for grades K-8 and \$6,000 for grades 9-12, or the school's tuition, whichever is less. The maximum for the Jon Peterson or Autism Scholarship programs is \$27,000 per student.

State Support for Nonpublic Schools: There were approximately 700 chartered private schools in Ohio in 2017. The Ohio Department of Education distributes funds allocated through the biennial budget to support privately operated schools. Private schools may use Auxiliary Services funds to buy books, computers and other equipment or hire clerks, school nurses or other personnel. The state allocated \$150 million to the fund for FY2018 and the same for FY2019. The schools may use Nonpublic Administrative Cost Reimbursements to pay for state-mandated administrative and clerical costs such as tracking voucher students, how the school spends state money and for state testing. The state allocated \$68 million in both fiscal years.

School districts must offer the same auxiliary services and perform the same administrative duties yet recently received substantially less from the state funds. In fact, Mark Gleichauf, superintendent of Brooklyn City Schools, testified to the Ohio House Finance Committee that under the 2017-2018 funding formulas, his district is one of 26 that receives less state money overall per pupil than St. Thomas More, a private Catholic school in Brooklyn. St. Thomas More received \$1,209 per pupil from the Auxiliary and Nonpublic Administrative funds, significantly less than the state's average payment of \$4,775 per pupil in FY2018. Brooklyn schools, however, received \$729 per pupil overall, despite the district's low income average, low property values and one of Ohio's highest school tax rates.

The DeRolph Decision

In 1997, the Ohio Supreme Court declared that Ohio's system of funding public education based on property taxes was unconstitutional and directed the legislature to create a more equitable school funding system. That new system has not been established to this date.

In March 2003, however, the Ohio Supreme Court ended the judicial debate over school funding in Ohio by granting a writ of prohibition, ordering the Perry County Court of Common Pleas to discontinue exercising jurisdiction over the DeRolph case. The decision assumes the General Assembly will create a constitutional school funding system.

As a result of the lawsuit, the case law generated in stages called DeRolph I and II, clearly affirms that the responsibility for securing a "thorough and efficient" system of common schools falls upon the state, and establishes "thorough and efficient" as

a high standard of quality for all schools.

The case led to the creation of a statewide program, now called the Ohio Facilities Commission, to build or renovate schools with the financial support of the state and local school districts. Since 1997 the state has allocated \$11.5 billion for classroom facilities and school, health, safety, and security upgrades. In partnership with school districts, 1,180 schools in 259 school districts affecting 650,000 students have been built or renovated.

However, some of the same issues cited in the DeRolph case, such as a high reliance on local property taxes to fund schools, or that state per-pupil funding has no relationship to an actual cost of a “thorough and efficient” education, remain.

Elections and Political Parties

Of all the responsibilities of a representative democracy, the right to vote is fundamental. This process enables people to select the officials who will make, administer, and interpret the law. Article V of the Ohio Constitution is entitled Elective Franchise; it sets forth who may vote, specifies the type of ballot to be used in general elections and establishes the direct primary. The statutes regulating voting and elections have been adopted by the General Assembly and can be found in Title XXXV of the Ohio Revised Code. They are administered primarily by the secretary of state, who is the chief elections officer.

In 2002 the federal government enacted the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). This wide-ranging election-reform legislation to improve the operation of elections required statewide computerized voting lists, “second-chance voting” with provisional ballots, and access for people with disabilities. HAVA moved much of the responsibility for the elections from the local level to the states.

Election laws continue to change with increasing frequency as the state legislature and the courts respond to concerns of campaigns and nonpartisan organizations. New restrictions on voter registration and on voting procedures are often modified or overturned by the courts. The following are the rules as of early 2018.

Voting

Who May Vote

A person who is a citizen of the United States, 18 years of age on or before the day of the general election, a resident of the state for 30 days before the election, and registered at least 30 days before the election, is qualified to vote in Ohio. For voting purposes, the law defines residence as the place “in which one’s habitation is fixed and to which whenever one is absent, one has the intention of returning.” Citizens who will be 18 by the November general election date are eligible to register to vote and participate in the primary elections to nominate candidates, even though they may be 17 at the time of the primary election. But, 17-year-olds may not vote on ballot issues.

Persons convicted of felonies lose their voting eligibility while incarcerated. When discharged or granted probation, parole, or pardon, their voting rights are

restored. A person may be determined to be incompetent to vote only by a probate judge following a judicial procedure.

Registration

The Ohio Constitution requires citizens to be registered with the state in order to vote. There are about 8 million registered voters in Ohio. Registration lists are maintained by county boards of elections, but under HAVA they must conform to a statewide database. There are a variety of ways that citizens meeting the above requirements can register to vote: in person at their county board of elections or designated branch offices established by the board of elections; the office of the Secretary of State; other designated state agency offices; any branch of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles; any public library, public high school, or vocational school; or any county treasurer's office. Ohio citizens may also register to vote online. Additionally, citizens may register to vote by mail through the secretary of state's office or their local board of elections. Anyone may download mail-in forms from the secretary of state's website and distribute them anywhere, at any time.

Voters who move or change their name must update their registration by reporting the changes to their local board of election. Address changes may be reported via any of the options listed above. Name changes require a paper registration form. Voters who change their name due to marriage or a court order, can update their voter registration through the courts by filing a "change of voting status." Registrations, changes of address and changes of name must be received or postmarked 30 days prior to an election to be valid for that election. With some

Voter Registration and Identification

Ohio is among the majority of states expected to enforce voter identification requirements during the 2020 elections. The state requires each voter to announce their name and address and show proof of identity at their polling place before they can vote. The following forms of identification are accepted:

- *a current (unexpired) Ohio driver's license or state ID with name and address (can have an old address and can include a temporary driver's license while awaiting mailing of a license)*
- *a U.S. military ID with name and photo (address not required)*
- *unexpired government ID with name, current address and photo (student ID is not accepted)*
- *an original or copy of a current utility bill (including a cell phone bill), bank or financial advisor statement, pay stub, government check, or other government document showing name and current address (other than a notice of voter registration mailed by a board of elections).*

exceptions that permit voters to vote a provisional or regular ballot, described later in this chapter, if the 30-day deadline is missed, the registration is still processed, but the citizen does not have the right to vote in the upcoming election. Voter registration is maintained unless the elector changes address, changes name, or fails to vote in at least a four-year period.

Electronic Voting in Ohio

In response to HAVA requirements, the state of Ohio made the transition from punch card ballots and lever voting machines to electronic touch screen voting machines or optical scan ballots. A variety of electronic voting machines exist; most require voters to touch a portion of a screen to cast their vote. Optical scan ballots require voters to fill in an oval or complete a broken arrow by a candidate's name. All voting systems must have provisions for write-in candidates. Since 2006, all Ohio counties must ensure that their voting system maintains a voter-verifiable paper trail of all ballots cast. The Ohio Board of Voting Machine Examiners is responsible for approving all voting equipment before a county buys and uses it in Ohio elections.

Absentee Voting

Ohio statutes permit anyone to vote an absentee ballot without having to provide a reason. There are special provisions for an armed services or overseas civilian absentee ballot. Those who wish to vote by absentee ballot must give their name, voting address, mailing address, date of birth, signature, and proof of identification. Proof of identification includes a driver's license number, the last four digits of a voter's Social Security Number, or a copy of the following: valid photo identification, military identification, current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document (other than a notice of voter registration mailed by a board of elections) that shows the voter's name and current address.

Registered voters may request an absentee ballot by mail from their board of elections, or voters may choose to vote in person at their county board of elections office or designated locations during the absentee voting period starting 28 days prior to the election. Mail absentee ballots may be requested after January 1 or 90 days before the date of an election, whichever is earlier, until the Saturday before Election Day. Ballots are not mailed until the day after the voter registration deadline for the election. Voters casting absentee ballots by mail must return them so that the board receives the ballots by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day. As an exception, mailed absentee ballots will be counted if postmarked the day before Election Day and received within 10 days after the election.

If a voter or a voter's minor child is hospitalized because of a medical emergency, the voter may vote by medical emergency absentee ballot and may have the ballot delivered and returned by a family member or by two board of elections employees of different political parties. Applications must be received by the board of elections

by 3 p.m. on Election Day and ballots returned to the board by 7:30 p.m. Certain electors who have moved from Ohio within 30 days before the election may vote absentee for president and vice president in the county of their former residence provided they cannot vote at their new residence.

UOCAVA Voters

There are special protections in both federal and state law to facilitate voting by members of the uniformed services and U.S. citizens living overseas. These are called Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters.

Armed Services Voting

Persons serving in the U.S. armed services, as well as their spouses and dependents who move to be with or near the person serving in the military, may vote by armed services voter's ballot if, other than current residency, they meet all requirements for voting in Ohio. The place where the person resided when entering the service is deemed the voting residence unless the service member establishes a permanent residence elsewhere. Members of the armed services, spouses or a close relative may apply for ballots electronically, by mail or by appearing before their board of elections anytime after January 1 of the year of the election.

If a ballot is mailed from outside the country and postmarked by the day before Election Day, it will be counted if received up to ten days after the election. Service members may also vote in person at the board of elections within 45 days before the election. Military members stationed in this country but outside Ohio may choose to register and vote where they live instead of voting by an armed services ballot.

Overseas Voting

Other U.S. citizens living overseas should contact the American embassy, consulate, or military installation in the country where they are residing regarding registering to vote from overseas and voting absentee.

Provisional Voting

Voters whose names do not appear on the voter registration roll when they arrive at their polling place may vote a provisional ballot, even if there is doubt about their eligibility. Under HAVA, the ballot is counted only when the voter's eligibility is verified after the election. If a voter does not provide proper identification, the voter may vote a provisional ballot and provide identification to the board of elections within seven days of Election Day.

If a registered voter has moved from one precinct to another within Ohio, the voter can vote in the new precinct on Election Day. The voter will complete a change of address form and vote a provisional ballot. A registered voter who has changed her or his name may vote a regular ballot if the voter can provide legal documentation of the name change. Otherwise, the registered voter may vote a provisional ballot and fill out a change of name on a paper registration.

Registered voters who have moved within their precinct can go to their precinct polling place on Election Day, file a change of address, and vote a regular ballot, which will be counted that night. Provisional ballots are counted in the official count, starting 11 days after the election. Provisional voters may find out if their ballot was counted by calling a toll-free number, 1-866-644-6868.

Ballots

The Ohio Constitution requires that ballots for general elections have the names of all candidates for an office arranged in a group under the title of the office they seek. This is called an office-type ballot. Within each voting machine, names are rotated on the ballot so that, so far as possible, each name appears an equal number of times at the beginning, the end, and in intermediate positions. The party name or designation is printed under or after each name. A voter must indicate — by touching a computer screen, filling in an oval or other approved method — the name of each individual for whom he or she is voting. Ohio does not allow voting a “straight party ticket,” automatically casting votes for all candidates from one party with a single touch or mark. In the general election, names of candidates for judge, boards of education and most municipal or township offices appear on a nonpartisan ballot.

Ballots must include a way to accept write-in votes for every office in both the primary and the general election. Polling place election officials maintain and provide to voters a list of all registered write-in candidates.

Constitutional amendments and state and local issues may be placed on the ballot of a primary, general or special election.

Wording of Issues

The *Ohio Ballot Board* is responsible for the wording of statewide ballot issues, including constitutional amendments, citizen-initiated laws, and referenda. Created by constitutional amendment in 1974, the five-member board is composed of the secretary of state and four members appointed by the legislative leadership. No more than two of these appointees can be from the same political party. If the board believes a proposed constitutional amendment creates a monopoly, oligopoly or cartel; specifies or determines a tax rate, or gives a commercial interest, right or license to a person, group, business or other nonpublic entity that’s not available to other similarly situated persons or nonpublic entity, the board will require that two separate questions appear on the ballot. The first question is “Shall the petitioner, in violation of division (B)(1) of Section 1e of Article II of the Ohio Constitution, be authorized to initiate a constitutional amendment that grants or creates a monopoly, oligopoly, or cartel, specifies or determines a tax rate, or confers a commercial interest, commercial right, or commercial license that is not available to other similarly situated persons?”

The ballot language prepared by the board may be found invalid by the courts

only if it misleads or defrauds the voters. The Ballot Board is also responsible for writing explanations for amendments proposed by the legislature.

The legislature requests proponent and opponent committees to write pro and con arguments for constitutional amendments proposed by the legislature. The committee named when citizens propose a constitutional amendment or new law by initiative or contest a law by referendum, writes the explanation and arguments for their cause. The explanation and arguments against the initiative or referendum are written by a committee named by either the General Assembly or the governor. If any of the parties fail to timely write or file the explanations and or arguments, the Ballot Board writes them or designates a group to do so.

The Ballot Board determines how the secretary of state disseminates information concerning ballot issues to voters. Currently, ballot language, explanations, and pro and con arguments for each statewide issue are published in a newspaper of general circulation in each county in the state once a week for three consecutive weeks prior to the election and posted on the secretary of state's website prior to the election.

Voting Procedure

County boards of elections assign each citizen a voting location, based on his or her voter registration address. Voting locations are open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on the day of an election. Electors enter the polling place and either give their name and address to an election judge and sign the poll list, or hand their driver's license or other official ID to an election judge, who scans the ID into an electronic poll book. When voters sign, their signature on the poll list is compared with that in the registration book, and the fact that the elector appeared to vote is noted on the record. Voters who cannot sign their names in the registration book may make a mark to represent their name. Their identity is verified by precinct officials of the polling place. Physically or mentally disabled or illiterate voters may receive help from two poll workers of different political parties or from a person of their choice, although not their own employer or a union official. With the exception of voters who receive accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, no voter may occupy a booth for more than 10 minutes when all are in use and people are waiting to vote.

The voting system instructions are posted for operating the voting system in use, and poll workers demonstrate its operation. Polling places are to be free of barriers to people with disabilities. Voting accessibility in every polling place is to be assured, and the facility must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If the voting system determines possible error by the voter, under HAVA, the voter is allowed to verify his or her vote and given the opportunity to correct any error, including errors requiring issuance of a replacement ballot. No campaign literature may be displayed or given out within 100 feet of any polling place. A voter,

however, is permitted to take a list of the voter's chosen candidates and issues into the polling place.

At any primary, special, or general election, electors may be challenged on grounds of age, citizenship, residence, or a charge of having already voted. Precinct election officials, also called poll workers, may challenge electors and also wrongful actions of fellow poll workers. Political parties or any group of five or more candidates may appoint a qualified elector to serve as an "observer." Observers primarily watch the polls and report back to parties and candidates, but when challenges are made, they may be asked to corroborate poll workers' testimony. Observers must notify the board of elections 11 days before the election of their appointment and take an oath prior to serving.

Elections

The general election for federal, state, and county officers is held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in even-numbered years. Elections for local, municipal and township offices are held on the same day in odd-numbered years. Presidential-year primary elections (2020, 2024) are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March. Other primary elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May in even-numbered years (2022, 2026); in odd-numbered years they are held on the date specified by the charter of the municipality holding the election. Special elections may be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May or August, or on the day authorized by a particular municipal or county charter.

Election Officials

Local administration of Ohio election law is based on the theory of bipartisanship, that is, that two competing major political parties will cooperate to serve the electors of the state. The secretary of state, as the chief election officer of the state, appoints a Board of Elections in each county to administer the law. When a county board is evenly divided on an election matter, the secretary of state has the power to cast the deciding vote. Each county board is composed of four members, two from each major political party, who serve four-year terms. The secretary of state appoints one new board member from the two major parties in each even-numbered year. The appointees are chosen from recommendations made by the executive committee of the county central committee of the major parties. After new appointments are made, the board elects a chairperson from among its members. The board then names a director, who must be of the opposite political party from the chair, and may name a deputy director, whose party must be opposite from that of the director. Both the board of elections and the costs of holding elections are financed by the county itself.

Among its duties, the board of elections registers voters, maintains records of registered voters, establishes wards and precincts, selects polling places for each

precinct, provides election equipment and supplies, reviews and certifies the sufficiency and validity of petitions and candidate nomination papers, prints and delivers ballots, and issues certificates of election (or nomination in primaries) to successful candidates. Each board of elections certifies election results to the secretary of state.

The board of elections appoints election officials who serve one-year terms and staff each of the voting locations within the county. No more than one-half of the officials can be from the same political party. These officials are responsible for the direct administration of an election, keeping a record of the voters, giving out and receiving ballots, and counting the votes and reporting them to the board of elections. The board of elections trains officials using materials provided by the secretary of state.

County boards of elections are responsible for conducting recounts. When the winning margin is less than one-half of one percent of the total vote for a local or district office, or one-quarter of one percent for statewide office, a recount is automatically ordered and is publicly funded. Candidates or persons on the losing side of an issue campaign may seek a recount by filing an application with the county board within five days after election results are certified. The applicant must indicate which county precincts should be recounted and pay a fee for each.

County boards of elections must audit general election results in even-numbered years by selecting precincts equaling 5 percent of ballots cast and comparing the electronic count in three different races to a hand count of those ballots.

The Primary Election

The primary election is an election to narrow the field of candidates who will represent the political parties in the general election. In Ohio, the primary is also used to select political party officials.

Ohio has a direct, semi-closed primary, which means that candidate voting is limited to those citizens who declare their party affiliation. Nonaffiliated voters may choose to become officially affiliated with a particular party by requesting that party's ballot at a primary election. Voters who have participated in primary elections and wish to change their party affiliation may be asked to sign a statement to that effect. However, party affiliation is in no way binding in the general election, in which voters may choose whichever candidate they consider most qualified.

Ballot issues are placed on a separate nonpartisan ballot during a primary election and voters need not state a party affiliation in order to cast a vote.

Primaries to nominate municipal officials and judges for the municipal court are held in municipalities as required by municipal charter or state law. A city charter may provide for either a partisan or nonpartisan primary. In nonpartisan primaries, the ballot lists all candidates without party labels, and all voters are eligible to vote for candidates. The two candidates receiving the most votes for each office run

against each other in the general election regardless of their party affiliation. In charter municipalities, dates for municipal primary elections are set in the charter.

Party candidates for U.S. president and vice president are not chosen directly through state primary elections. The state primary ballot lists all names of party candidates running for office, but the election results determine only the number of delegates that will be committed to each candidate at national nominating conventions, according to each political party's rules. Delegates act as proxies, casting votes at the national conventions held during the summer of presidential election years.

The General Election

In even-numbered years, candidates for the following offices are nominated and elected:

FEDERAL: U.S. president/vice president to four-year terms (2020, 2024); two U.S. senators to staggered six-year terms (2022, 2024); all members of the U.S. House to two-year terms (2020, 2022).

STATE: Governor/lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, auditor of state, treasurer of state to four-year terms (2022, 2026); half of the state senators every two years to four-year terms; all state representatives to two-year terms; justices of the Supreme Court to overlapping six-year terms; courts of appeals judges to overlapping six-year terms; State Board of Education members to overlapping six-year terms.

COUNTY: Three commissioners (except in Summit and Cuyahoga counties), auditor, prosecutor, sheriff, recorder, treasurer, engineer, coroner, and clerk of courts to four-year terms. Common pleas court and county court judges are elected to overlapping six-year terms. One commissioner and the auditor are elected in state election years, all others in presidential election years.

In odd-numbered years, municipal and township officials, municipal court judges, and members of local boards of education are elected.

Candidates

Each citizen who chooses to run for elected office must meet a set of prerequisites. All elected positions have a residency and "registered voter" requirement, and most have other conditions the candidate must meet. Candidates also must file a statement of candidacy and circulate petitions to gather signatures of voters supporting their candidacy. The number of signatures candidates must gather depends on the office sought and whether they represent a political party or are independent candidates. Party candidates are those who are members of a particular party, whereas independent candidates do not represent any political party. No one may be a party candidate who has voted as a member of a different political party in the last two calendar years, unless it is to become a candidate for a newly formed political party. Party candidates may collect the signatures only of those citizens affiliated with the same political party.

Only registered voters who are residents of the district or political subdivision in which the candidate is seeking office may sign that candidate's petition. They must sign in ink or indelible pencil, and each signature must be followed by the date and the signer's address. Petition circulators must declare that they witnessed the signing of all signatures and that, to the best of their knowledge, they are valid. The petitions are submitted along with a specified filing fee to either the secretary of state's office or the board of elections, depending on the office. For all offices but state and county central committees, party candidates must submit petitions and fees 90 days prior to the primary election, and independent candidates one day prior.

The secretary of state or the appropriate board of elections determines whether a petition has the required number of signatures. Local boards of elections determine the validity of the signatures from their counties. A candidate may withdraw from an election by filing a written statement any time prior to the election. Citizens may protest the candidacy in writing, through the board of elections where the petition was filed. Election officials must schedule a hearing and notify the candidate and those protesting the candidacy. At the time of the hearing, the board determines the validity of the petitions and declares whether the candidacy is valid or invalid.

Judicial Candidates

See page 23 for details.

Write-in Candidates

A write-in candidate must file a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate at least 72 days before the election, meet all requirements for the office and pay the appropriate filing fee for the office sought. Otherwise, no votes for the candidate are counted. The declaration is filed with the secretary of state for a statewide office or with the county board of elections for a district or local office. Write-in candidates for U.S. president and vice president must also file a slate of presidential electors—18 electors who will represent them in the Electoral College, should the candidates win the general election.

Financing Campaigns

Political campaigns in Ohio are financed generally through contributions from individuals, businesses, political parties and organizations that support the election of a particular candidate. State campaign finance laws regulate contributions as well as how they can be spent. Ohio law requires candidates, political parties and political action committees, or PACs, to publicly disclose all contributions and expenditures made each year through regular reports. Campaign finance law has established limits on contributions to state political candidates. These contribution limits are revised in January in odd-numbered years.

When an individual becomes a candidate for elected office, the candidate must

form a committee immediately and appoint a treasurer. The candidate may decide to be the sole member of the committee; in that case, the candidate is the treasurer of the committee as well. The committee is responsible for receiving all campaign contributions and paying all expenditures. PACs are defined as two or more persons who receive contributions or make expenditures to influence an election.

Campaign committees, PACs and political parties must file the following contribution and expenditure reports.

- A pre-election report at least 12 days before the election if the committee, PAC or party received or spent more than \$1,000
- A post-election report within 38 days after the election
- A semiannual report due the end of July if the candidate, party or PAC was not required to file a report after the immediate preceding primary election
- An annual report due the end of January in non-election years

Candidate committee reports are filed with either the secretary of state or the local board of elections, depending on the office. Local candidates are exempt from filing reports if their campaign finances fall below a specified minimum of contributions and expenditures.

Reports from PACs that focus a majority of attention on statewide issues and candidates file with the secretary of state. Locally focused PACs file with the board of elections of the most populous county in the district where they have concentrated their activities. Statewide political parties file with the secretary of state, county parties with county boards of election or, if they contributed to a statewide candidate or received money from corporations or labor organizations, the secretary of state.

The Ohio Elections Commission (OEC) oversees political party spending, campaign finance and corporate political contributions. The commission investigates cases of unlawful campaign practices, campaign law violations, and dissemination of political communications with no identification of those responsible for the material. OEC may impose a fine or send the findings of its investigations to the appropriate county prosecutor for action. OEC is also responsible for making recommendations to the General Assembly regarding campaign practices and political spending.

The General Assembly created the commission in 1974. The governor appoints six members to OEC, based on recommendations of the two major party caucuses of the General Assembly. These six members (three from each party) select the seventh member, who serves as chair. Each member serves a five-year term. Terms overlap.

Political Parties

The political party is the organization through which individual citizens work with others of similar ideas to influence the policies and conduct of government. The functions of the party are to choose candidates to run for office in the general election, work for the nomination and election of its candidates, formulate the party

platform or position on issues, carry out party policies, and educate voters in civic and political matters. When voters declare a party preference at a primary election in Ohio, they are considered members of that political party.

The Ohio Revised Code (ORC) defines a political party as any group of voters whose candidate for governor or delegates for presidential candidate received at least 3 percent of the vote cast for that office in the most recent regular state election. A political party may be formed when a group of voters files a petition with the secretary of state declaring their intention to organize a political party and participate in the next primary election. The petition must be signed by a number of registered voters equal to one percent of the total votes cast for governor at the last general election. The signers must include at least 500 voters from each of one-half of Ohio's congressional districts. A new political party may not assume a name that will cause it to be confused with an existing party. No party that in any way advocates forceful or violent overthrow of local, state, or national government may be recognized or given a place on the ballot. The state no longer recognizes a party if the party candidate fails to poll at least 5 percent of the total vote cast for governor.

The ORC defines two types of political parties in Ohio. A major political party is one whose nominee for governor received at least 20 percent of the vote in the last election, a minor party is one whose candidate received at least 3 percent but less than 20 percent.

Party Organization

In Ohio, state law outlines the basic organizational structure of political parties at state and county levels and establishes procedures for party leaders.

STATE: Major political parties are required to have a state central committee made up of one man and one woman from each congressional district in the state, elected at the primary in even-numbered years. The state central committee is the party's controlling committee. It is responsible for coordinating party affairs throughout Ohio, arranging for the state convention at which the party platform is formulated, raising and distributing campaign funds, and determining which candidates shall have party support. Within major parties, the state central committee elects an executive committee and a state chair. Minor parties have no organizational requirements but must file an organization plan with the secretary of state if they wish to elect controlling committees at the primary.

COUNTY: Major political parties must elect a county central committee in each county, made up of one elected person from each election precinct in the county, or from each ward in each city and from each township in the county. The committee directs party activity within the county, presenting a slate of candidates and working with the precinct committee to strengthen the party by enlisting active party workers at the precinct level. Precinct committee members are generally elected to four-year terms.

Public Participation in Politics

Ohioans take part in politics when they voice their opinions on schools or taxes, contribute money to a candidate or cause, join a group backing an issue, sign a petition, vote, or write their legislators. Members of the public may choose to participate in varying degrees and ways. Participation, in whatever form, helps strengthen the system of self-government.

Voting is the initial and easiest form of participation for most citizens. Qualifications and procedures for voting are outlined in the preceding chapter. Further opportunities for political involvement include lobbying and testifying before the legislature; writing to public officials; participating in initiative and referendum petition drives; campaigning for issues or candidates; running for office; serving on government boards, commissions and committees; monitoring governmental meetings; and litigation. Many federal programs require public participation in planning how funds are to be spent.

Contacting Officials

Government officials need to hear from their constituents to better understand what voters are thinking. Individuals may contact their government officials in many ways, including by letter, e-mail, telephone, and in-person meetings. Guidelines for communicating with officials are on page 114.

Testifying at Hearings

Committees in the state legislature, Congress and city halls hold public hearings on proposed laws before the entire chamber debates and votes on them. Government agencies hold hearings before adopting rules for administering laws. Public hearings give individuals, groups and organizations a chance to present their views on a proposed law or rule, to give the reasons why they think it should or should not be adopted, to suggest amendments and to answer legislators' questions directly about the proposal's effect on them. Individuals do not have to be experts to testify at hearings. An informal statement by a single person can be dramatic and effective; those who represent a number of Ohioans carry still more weight.

Those wishing to testify should notify the chair of the committee before a hearing begins by filling out a witness slip and returning it to the committee's legislative aide. Many committees ask that testimony be submitted electronically the day

The Do's and Don'ts of Contacting Government Officials

DO

- get in contact.
- let government officials know when you agree with them, not just when you disagree.
- be brief and to the point; discuss only one issue, and include a specific bill reference if possible.
- clearly express your opinions or ideas.
- use your own words to express your opinion.
- include your contact information and signature.
- be courteous and reasonable.
- make contact early in the session before a bill has been introduced if you have ideas about an issue you would like to see incorporated in legislation. If you are lobbying for or against a bill, and your representative is a member of the committee to which it has been referred, write when the committee begins hearings. If your representative is not a member of the committee handling the bill, write just before the bill comes to the floor for debate and vote.
- contact the chair and members of a committee holding hearings on legislation in which you are interested. While you have more influence with the representative from your own district, you are not precluded from contacting representatives from other districts.
- contact each government official individually; it's courteous and more effective.

DON'T

- apologize for contacting them. (Your opinion is not an imposition, and your representative is elected in part to hear your views.)
- begin on the righteous note of “as a citizen and taxpayer.”
- be vague.
- be rude or threatening.
- sign and send a form letter or photocopied letter or e-mail.

before the committee meeting. When called to testify, individuals should begin by stating their name (and the name of their organization, if applicable, along with its size and goals) and the basis of their concern with the issue.

Clearly state support or opposition to the proposed bill or rule, giving reasons and specific examples from experience. The most effective speakers are calm and direct, taking a positive approach if possible; they are brief and specific and use their own words. Formal statements on behalf of an organization should be in

writing, with copies provided to the committee members and to the media.

Hearings are a useful part of the democratic process at every level of government. These guidelines for giving effective testimony before a state legislative committee apply as well to a hearing before a municipal zoning commission, a county budget commission, or any other board or agency.

Correct Salutations and Closings

FEDERAL

President

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Very respectfully yours,

To email the President, go to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/> then fill out the online form.

Vice President

The White House
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Vice President:

Sincerely yours,

Senator

The Honorable [Name]
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator [Name]:

Sincerely yours,

Representative

The Honorable [Name]
Look up each representative's address at:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives>

Dear Representative [Name]:

Sincerely yours,

STATE

Governor

The Honorable [Name]
Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215-6117

Dear Governor [Name]:

Sincerely yours,

To email the governor, go to: <http://governor.ohio.gov/Contact/Contact-the-Governor> then fill out the online form.

Senator

The Honorable [Name]
Look up each senator's address at: <http://ohiosenate.gov/members/contacting-your-senator>

Dear Senator [Name]:

Sincerely yours,

Representative

The Honorable [Name]
Look up each representative's address at:

<http://www.ohiohouse.gov/members/member-directory>

Dear Representative [Name]:

Sincerely yours,

For information about contacting other elected officials, go to www.ohio.gov/agencies

State Legislative Lobbying

The laws of the state are passed by the legislature (General Assembly). Lobbying is the art of persuading elected representatives to pass, defeat, or amend laws. Lobbyists perform an essential function in the democratic process. They provide legislators with facts relating to proposed laws and background information that might not otherwise be available. A lobbyist's job is also to demonstrate to the legislature that substantial support for or opposition to change exists among the voters.

A person does not have to be paid to be a lobbyist. While many corporations, unions, and associations pay their lobbyists, other groups use volunteers. There is always opportunity for people who feel strongly about a legislative objective to work for or against its passage. Good lobbyists should have a thorough understanding of the issue, a commitment to the cause, enthusiasm, sincerity, and a sense of humor. They build rapport and understanding with legislators by personal contact, presenting them with relevant factual material and demonstrating support from constituents.

Ohio law requires all paid lobbyists and other persons paid full or part-time to try to influence legislation to register with the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee (JLEC). Paid staff of organizations may testify in hearings without being considered lobbyists who need to register with the JLEC. Volunteer lobbyists and those lobbying on their own behalf do not register.

The Do's and Don'ts for Lobbyists

DO

- recognize legislators as human and show them respect. Use the visit to get information, ask questions.
- get to know their staffs and treat them courteously.
- identify yourself immediately with each contact.
- know the issue and status of the legislation.
- know the legislators (their past records on legislation, party, position in the legislature, legislative and outside interests).
- commend them for actions you approve.
- be brief, then follow up periodically.
- give legislators easy-to-read materials with important facts highlighted.

DON'T

- be arrogant, condescending, or threatening.
- overwhelm them with too much written material that they do not have time to read.
- get into prolonged arguments.

The same rules apply for lobbying members of Congress and federal agencies.

Initiative and Referendum

The Ohio Constitution gives Ohioans rights to propose constitutional amendments or new statutory laws through ballot initiatives and propose, through referendums, that voters reject laws passed by the legislature. Initiative and referendum provisions are a final protection for citizens who believe the legislature has ignored an important issue or passed a bad law. Ohioans exercise these powers by filing petitions containing the required number of signatures with the appropriate authority, resulting in a statewide vote.

In each case, the process starts when petitioners designate a committee of three to five persons to represent them, draft their initiative or referendum proposal and collect at least 1,000 voters' signatures on their petition.

For initiatives, petitioners must file the proposal, a summary and the petition with the attorney general, who must certify the summary is fair and truthful. The attorney general then forwards the information to the Ohio Ballot Board, which must certify the proposal contains only one constitutional amendment. The certifications are then filed with the secretary of state's office.

The people bypass the legislature by initiating a constitutional amendment directly. After the certifications, Ohioans who initiated the amendment must circulate petitions to collect enough signatures to equal 10 percent of the electors voting for governor in the last gubernatorial election. At a minimum, signatures must come from half of Ohio's 88 counties and represent no less than five percent of the total vote cast for governor in each of those counties in the last gubernatorial election. The petitioners must submit the signatures to the secretary of state no later than 125 days prior to the general election so that the office, with the assistance of the local boards of elections, can verify the validity of the signatures. The ballot wording, explanations and arguments for and against are prepared and made available to the public, as explained on page 105. If a majority of the voters approve the amendment, it becomes part of the constitution.

The process for initiating laws (statutes) allows Ohioans to first prod the General Assembly, and if it fails, take the proposed law directly to voters. After the initial certifications, petitioners must collect signatures equal to three percent of the electors voting in the last gubernatorial election, from at least half of Ohio's 88 counties. The signatures must equal at least 1.5 percent of the vote in each county. If the secretary of state validates these signatures, the proposed law is introduced in the legislature.

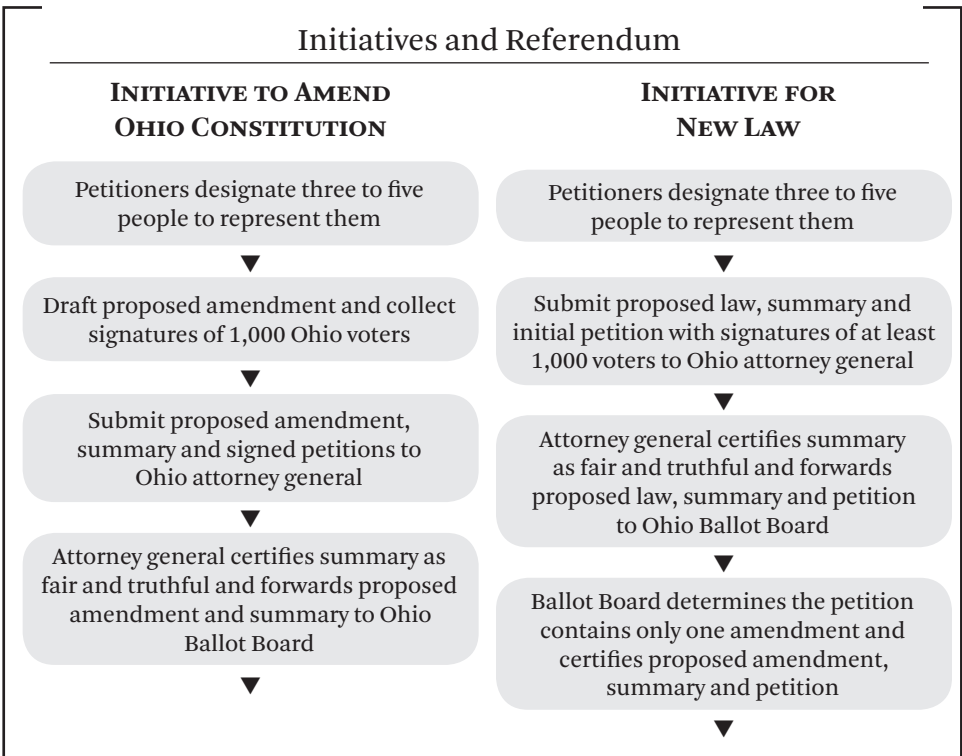
If the legislature fails to pass the law in four months or passes an amended version, the petitioners have 90 days to collect signatures equal to an additional 3 percent of voters under the same rules as the second petition required in this process. If the secretary of state verifies the signatures, the Ballot Board writes the official ballot language and certifies it to the secretary of state within 75 days of the

election. Ohio residents vote on the law at the next general election at least 125 days after this third petition is filed. If voters approve, the law becomes effective. It is not subject to the governor’s veto.

Ohioans may petition for a referendum on any law passed by the legislature with the exception of emergency laws, tax levies or appropriations of current expenses. They first file the 1,000-signature petition and full text and summary of their proposal with the secretary of state who has 10 days to verify the signatures and certify the referendum text is correct. The day of or the day after filing with the secretary of state, the citizen group must file the same information with the attorney general, who has 10 days to certify the summary as fair and truthful.

If both offices certify, petitioners must then collect enough signatures to equal 6 percent of the electors voting in the last gubernatorial election. The signatures must come from at least 44 of the 88 counties and equal at least 3 percent of the vote cast in each county. The petitioners must file these petitions with the secretary of state no later than 90 days after the governor filed the law at issue with the secretary of state.

If the secretary of state validates the signatures, the law is put to a statewide vote at the next regular or general election at least 125 days after the petition is filed. If voters disapprove the law, it cannot take effect.



Ballot Board determines the petition contains only one amendment and certifies proposed amendment, summary and petition

Submit a certified copy of the amendment's full text, summary and petition to Ohio secretary of state

Circulate petition, collecting signatures equal to at least 10 percent of electors voting in last gubernatorial election; signatures must come from at least 44 counties and equal at least 5 percent of votes cast in each county in last gubernatorial election

Submit petition to secretary of state no later than 125 days before the general election at which the amendment will be placed on the ballot

Ballot Board prescribes ballot language; under certain circumstances, the board may add a companion question

Proposed amendment and arguments for and against are published in a newspaper of general circulation in each county once a week for three weeks prior to the election

If approved by majority of voters, amendment becomes part of Ohio Constitution

INITIATIVE TO AMEND OHIO CONSTITUTION

Submit a certified copy of amendment's full text, summary and petition to Ohio secretary of state

Petitioners circulate petition, collect signatures equaling at least 3 percent of votes in last gubernatorial election; signatures must come from 44 counties and equal at least 1.5 percent of votes cast in each county in last gubernatorial election

Petitioners file signed petition with secretary of state at least 10 days before the first Monday in January, which is when a session of the General Assembly begins

If the legislature fails to pass the law within four months or passes an amended version, within 90 days petitioners must collect signatures from an additional 3 percent of voters under the same requirements as above

Petitioners file signed petition with secretary of state no later than 125 days prior to election at which the proposal will be placed on the ballot

Ballot Board prescribes ballot language for proposal

Proposed law and arguments for and against are published in a newspaper of general circulation in each county once a week for three weeks prior to election

If voters approve, proposal becomes law

INITIATIVE FOR NEW LAW

Initiatives and Referendum

REFERENDUM ON LAW

Petitioners designate three to five people to represent them



Submit initial petition seeking referendum with full text and summary of the law or section of law being challenged and the signatures of 1,000 voters to the Ohio secretary of state; within a day, submit same to Ohio attorney general



If attorney general certifies the summary as fair and truthful, petitioners circulate petition and gather signatures equal to 6 percent of electors voting in the last gubernatorial election; signatures must come from at least 44 counties and equal at least 3 percent of votes cast in each county



Signed petition must be filed with the secretary of state within 90 days after law being challenged was filed with the secretary of state by the governor



Electors vote on referendum at the next regular or general election 125 or more days after the petition is filed



If the majority disapproves the law, it does not take effect

Source: Ohio Secretary of State: <https://www.sos.state.oh.us/legislation-and-ballot-issues/putting-an-issue-on-the-ballot/#gref>

Monitoring the Administration

After laws are passed, the executive branch of government is responsible for administering and enforcing them. Ohioans have a right to know what executive branch officials are doing and are aided by The Ohio Open Meetings Act, originally adopted in 1954, and Ohio Public Records Act, originally adopted in 1963. The acts, which have been repeatedly amended, are referred to as Ohio's sunshine laws.

The Ohio Open Meetings Act requires public bodies to conduct official business in meetings open to the public at all times. Any prearranged meeting of a majority of members of a governmental body to discuss or conduct public business is a public meeting. Public bodies must establish a method for Ohioans to learn the time and place of regular or special meetings they hold and must notify the media immediately if an emergency meeting is called. There are several public organizations that are exempt from all Open Meetings Act provisions due to the nature of the organization. They are grand juries, audit conferences, and the Ohio Organized

Crime Investigation Commission. Furthermore, certain meetings of the Adult Parole Authority, the State Medical Board, the Board of Nursing, and the Emergency Response Commission are exempt from Open Meetings Act requirements.

Under certain circumstances, several state agencies and other public bodies that are subject to the Open Meetings Act may hold “executive sessions” that are closed to the public. Closed sessions are permitted to discuss pending litigation with an attorney, personnel matters, the purchase or sale of public property, collective bargaining issues and security arrangements. But, specific motions and their disposition stemming from the closed sessions must always be made in open session.

Any person or organization may bring suit in common pleas court against a public body holding or planning to hold an unauthorized closed meeting. Under the Open Records Act, full and accurate minutes of public meetings must be recorded and open to public inspection. In fact, all public records must be open at all reasonable times for inspection. Any document that records the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of a public body is a public record under the law. Persons responsible for public records are required to make copies of them available at cost to anyone requesting them within a reasonable period of time.

A 2016 law gives individuals, organizations and the media a new avenue to challenge state agencies they believe are wrongly withholding public records. Rather than file a lawsuit, they may file an appeal to the Ohio Court of Claims and receive a ruling within 60 days in most cases. The cost of filing an appeal is \$25, significantly less than going to court.

Going to Court

Although people’s rights and duties may appear to be guaranteed or defined by laws or by the constitution, there is often room for interpretation. Litigation is a way to determine exactly what those rights and duties are and to ensure compliance with them. Advocacy groups increasingly are suing in court to protect public interests over voting rights, gun rights, abortion access, protection from pollution and more.

By forming a coalition with other organizations or by working with a law firm that will handle public interest cases pro bono—that is, without charge or at a reduced rate—can reduce the expense of initiating a lawsuit. Some national organizations take cases they consider to be of public concern without charge, or they have access to low-cost legal aid, such as law school faculties and government-paid legal aid lawyers. If a plaintiff wins the suit, the court may order that plaintiff’s attorney’s fees be paid by the defendant. Court costs are an additional expense.

A person or group who is not a party to litigation can become involved in a limited way by filing an *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) brief in a suit brought by another organization or individual. The court, and often both parties, must first give

permission. Those who receive permission can submit an amicus brief that advises the court of relevant information, implications or other points on which they have expertise, but the filer has no control over the suit or relief requested.

Appointment to Boards, Commissions and Councils

Many advisory or policy-making boards and committees include individuals appointed by the governor or an appointing body. A citizen can apply for appointment to one of these boards and, through it, influence state or local decision-making.

In most cases, an Ohioan must have knowledge specific to the organization in order to be appointed. Individuals may demonstrate the required knowledge by establishing a professional reputation in the field, or actively participating in pertinent politics, such as lobbying, or through participation in a reputable volunteer organization such as Common Cause, the Farm Bureau, the American Civil Liberties Union, or the League of Women Voters. These organizations are often asked to nominate a candidate for an ad-hoc or standing committee on a particular problem.

There are various positions that do not require professional expertise. Sometimes a relevant life experience is of prime importance, as in an advocacy council for people with disabilities. Citizens with experience and interest can write to their congressional delegates or other elected officials, give their qualifications, and ask for an appointment. Advisory boards exist at the local, state, and federal levels.

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The Supreme Court of Ohio & The Ohio Judicial System. About the Supreme Court and Ohio Judicial System sections. <http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/>

U.S. Census Bureau. <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

More Useful Websites

In addition to the websites listed throughout the book and in the selected bibliography, below are other sources of information about Ohio government and officials.

Executive Branch:

Ohio attorney general: <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/>

Ohio attorney general: *Ohio Sunshine Laws 2018.*

<https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Files/Publications-Files/Publications-for-Legal/Sunshine-Law-Publications/Sunshine-Laws-Manual.aspx>

Ohio auditor: <https://www.ohioauditor.gov/>

Ohio governor: <https://governor.ohio.gov/>

Ohio secretary of state: <https://www.sos.state.oh.us/#gref>

Ohio secretary of state, county boards of elections: <https://www.sos.state.oh.us/elections/elections-officials/county-boards-of-elections-directory/#gref>

Ohio secretary of state, campaign finance reports: <https://www.sos.state.oh.us/campaign-finance/search/>

Ohio state directory, listing of state agencies, departments, boards and commissions: <https://ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/site/help-center/state-directory>

Ohio treasurer: <http://www.tos.ohio>.

Ohio treasurer: OHIOCHECKBOOK.com

Ohio treasurer, state salary search: http://www.tos.ohio.gov/State_Salary

General Assembly

Find your legislator: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislators/find-my-legislators>

Ohio House: <http://www.ohiohouse.gov/members/member-directory>

Ohio Legislative Service Commission: <https://www.lsc.ohio.gov/>

Ohio legislature, search legislation: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/search>

Ohio legislature, track legislation: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/about-my-ohio-legislature>

Ohio Senate: <http://www.ohiosenate.gov/senators>

Judiciary

National Center for State Courts, information and resources: <https://www.ncsc.org/information-and-resources.aspx>

Ohio Supreme Court: <http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/>

Ohio Supreme Court, attorney search: <https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/AttorneySearch/#/search>

Ohio Bar Association. *The Law and You: Legal Handbook for Ohio Consumers and Journalists*. 2012. <https://www.ohiobar.org/public-resources/commonly-asked-law-questions-results/the-law-and-you-a-legal-handbook-for-ohio-consumers-and-journalists/>

Ohio Bar Association, commonly asked law questions: <https://www.ohiobar.org/LegalHelp/>. *See Courts & Lawyers*

General

Ohio government, services for residents and connections to officeholders in the state's counties, municipalities and townships: <https://ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/site/home/>

Federal

Federal elections data: <https://www.fec.gov/data/>

How to contact your elected officials: <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>

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