

## Senate to vote on \$61B Ohio budget today

The Ohio Senate plans to vote today on a more than \$61 billion two-year state budget after making hundreds of changes this week to the version passed by the House in April. The Senate Finance Committee made a few more changes on Wednesday before approving it without the support of the Democrats on the panel. The committee's chairman Sen. Scott Oelslager, R-North Canton, said the budget focuses on job creation, shown through more money for K-12 education and a 50 percent income tax cut up to \$375,000 for business owners and pass-through entities. "Our whole goal this whole budget cycle has been a job creation budget," Oelslager said. "Job creation is the number one priority of the people of Ohio. If a person has a job they're likely in pretty good shape." Wednesday's changes included removing the 2 percent vehicle registration fee increase and adding a new tax on motor vehicle fuel receipts to replace the commercial activity tax. Sen. Bill Coley, R-West Chester, said the new tax would in effect be revenue neutral and fuel companies agreed to the change. Last year, the Ohio Supreme Court decided the state could not use revenue from the CAT collected on fuel for anything other than highway and road improvement. The change puts that money — \$140 million a year — back into the general revenue fund. The general revenue fund is the state's main pot of money to pay for Ohio's public schools, colleges and universities, law enforcement, health services and other public services. The Senate plan includes:

- \* \$717 million more in direct aid to school districts than the current budget;
- \* a \$1.4 billion tax cut for pass-through entities;
- \* new K-12 and higher education funding formulas;
- \* a slew of earmarks and other provisions requested by individual lawmakers.

Democrats said the budget shortchanges women, schools and communities. Sen. Tom Sawyer, D-Akron, said that investing in those groups would help Ohio's economy and the best way to do that would be to expand Medicaid, the state- and federally-funded health insurance program for poor and disabled people, to 275,000 Ohioans. "I'm very hopeful this is not the end of this discussion and we will move forward," Sawyer said. GOP senators rejected Democrats' attempts to remove language targeting family planning clinics that offer abortive services. One provision puts centers that only offer family-planning services at the end of the line to receive federal family planning dollars and the other provision prohibits ambulatory surgical facilities that perform or induce abortions from having patient transfer agreements — required by law — with public hospitals. Abortion rights groups said both measures would force some clinics to close. Sen. Charleta Tavares, D-Columbus, called the legislation "paternalistic and controlling government" not necessary in women's lives. Democrats also failed to pass amendments adding more money to K-12 education and food banks. The House is unlikely to agree with all the changes made by the Senate, so members from both chambers will start working out differences in the bill as early as next week before sending it to the governor for his signature before June 30.

## **Local governments warn of more cuts, higher taxes**

Throughout Southwest Ohio, local governments face the likelihood that recent cuts in state funding will gain permanence when state budget talks end this month, raising the threat of higher local taxes for communities that don't slash costs further. During the past two years, cities, townships and counties have seen budgets and local services squeezed by cuts in state aid, vanishing state taxes and lower property values. This year, with the state expecting extra revenue from an improving economy, local governments hoped to get help. But neither the Ohio House budget passed this spring nor the Senate version set to pass today include additional funding for local governments, which Republican state leaders say must operate more efficiently. Rather than restore some money for counties or municipalities, legislators have crafted budgets that return to taxpayers the extra tax revenue expected from Ohio's improving economy, in the form of either a 50 percent small-business tax cut or a 7 percent statewide income tax cut. Each option is worth about \$700 million a year, an amount that would essentially cover the losses local governments have sustained since 2010-2011. Meanwhile, many localities say they can't cut much more and will likely try to raise Ohioans' taxes in the coming years – in essence, warning of local tax increases as a result of state tax cuts. “Do we look for some sort of tax increase? Do we look for more cuts? But we've pretty much cut all that we can cut,” said Steve Husemann, interim village manager in Silverton. State funding cuts have taken \$130,000 out of Silverton's \$2.3 million budget each of the last two years, causing the village to cut its police force 20 percent and put off all improvements to roads and buildings. Much of the counties' and municipalities' pain started two years ago. Just as local economies started to recover from the Great Recession, the Republican-controlled General Assembly passed a two-year budget to cut in half the Local Government Fund, a pot of state tax revenue long shared with counties, townships and cities. The fund is set to fall from \$694.4 million in 2010-2011 to \$348 million in 2012-2013 – a funding level last seen in the late 1980s. Then, the fund will see single-digit growth percentages in 2014 and 2015, increasing to \$376.5 million in 2014-2015, but General Assembly Republicans have not yielded to pleas for more substantial help. “We were done with the fiscal crisis. We had already been through our wave of cuts. Then the state came through and hit us again,” said John Bruggen, budget director for Hamilton County. The county's Local Government Fund appropriation fell from \$20.7 million in 2010-2011 – 10 percent of Hamilton County's total budget – to \$10.9 million in 2012-2013, down to 5.6 percent of the budget. What's more, local governments have seen steady declines in state money related to taxes on utilities and business equipment, both stemming from tax cuts in 2005. In January, Ohio's estate tax ended. Townships and cities had received 80 percent of those proceeds and have suddenly found themselves out another \$200 to \$300 million. Localities have been warning of possible tax increases. Still, the number of local government levies on ballots has remained constant at about 1,100 to 1,300 a year, according to data from the Ohio Secretary of State's office. Instead of raising taxes, Republican state leaders say local governments need to cut back and collaborate to adjust to their new reality. After all, overall cuts to local governments have been small compared with the \$14 billion they receive from the state, according to the Office of Management and Budget. That amount includes property tax relief, school funding, money for county jails and prosecutors and a fund set aside to give grants to local governments that innovate. For instance, Senate Majority Whip Larry Obhof, R-Medina, sponsored a bill two years ago that allowed townships to create joint police districts. “If townships want to work together, instead of having two police districts, instead of having a different building in every township, they could work

collaboratively,” he said. That’s the kind of innovation Southwest Ohio governments should embrace, said Randy Cole, president of the Ohio Controlling Board and policy adviser to state budget director Timothy Keen. For instance, he points to a Warren County decision to join a state radio coalition as it upgrades its emergency radio system. The county is spending \$8 million to fix the aging system, but would have spent another \$1.2 million if it hadn’t joined the state group. Joining the coalition also will save Warren County \$200,000 annually in maintenance costs. But other examples of local government collaborations are rare in Southwest Ohio, especially compared with the rest of the state, Cole said. Southwest Ohio’s township structure and focus on neighborhood identities seem to have made its local governments less open to working together to save money, he said. “Shared services isn’t a project. It’s a cultural change,” Cole said. He suggests cities, townships, counties and schools consider merging fueling and maintenance operations so they can save money through joint facilities and bulk purchases, Cole said. “That’s when they get to the economies of scale,” he said. But many local governments say having their own services provides a benefit that state leaders don’t quite understand. “Down here, people live in townships because they love what townships provide,” said Rocky Boiman, chair of the Green Township trustees, where recent cuts in state money have accounted for a 17 percent hit to the budget. Green Township police officers, for instance, “are active in the community, their kids play on the same baseball team, and I think that shouldn’t be overlooked.” Many localities also say additional cuts would compromise the quality of their services. In Cincinnati, where state funding cuts make up \$22 million of the city’s \$35 million deficit, firefighters say extra state funding could eventually lead to changes in the daily “brownouts” of five of the city’s 26 fire stations. As it is, the cuts have caused firefighters to drive inefficient routes with longer response times, said Doug Stern, an emergency medical technician from the Camp Washington fire house. For instance, he once responded to a medical emergency that took him from Camp Washington all the way to the edge of the city in College Hill. Local Republican government officials like Green Township’s Boiman have found themselves at odds with Republican legislators and the Kasich administration and aligned with Democratic legislators, who have advocated for more money for local governments. “Before I became a trustee – ‘Should we cut the estate tax and local government fund? Sounds good,’ ” Boiman said. “But when you get down to it, it’s just a lot at once.”

*Cincinnati Enquirer*. 6/6/13

## **National campaign to increase federal and state government Latino appointments**

Today, the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 34 preeminent Hispanic organizations in the United States, announced its national advocacy campaign to increase Federal and state-level Latino Appointments. Although Latinos have grown in population and political power throughout the United States, the number of Latinos appointed on the federal and state executive levels remains dismal. The NHLA will undertake a federal appointments advocacy effort and the first-ever national campaign to increase the number of state executive level Latino appointments in key Latino populated states throughout the country. NHLA's Latino Appointments Program will prioritize four key projects:

1. Developing and supporting a talent bank of Latino professionals interested in presidential and state-level appointments.
2. Launching a four-state pilot program in key Latino-populated states to tackle the state-level appointment gaps.
3. Cultivating a network of current and former Latino appointees that can serve as a resource to each other and to prospective candidates.
4. Drafting a report to the community on short-term lessons learned and long-term recommendations for strengthening the political pipeline for the Latino community.

"At such a critical time in our nation's history, we must work harder than ever to ensure that Latinos have a seat at the decision-making table," remarked Hector Sanchez, NHLA Chair & LCLAA President. "NHLA's Latino Appointments Project is a historic step towards acknowledging long-standing disparities in the government. By building this infrastructure around presidential and state-level appointments, developing a talent bank and investing in a comprehensive leadership development program, we hope to be a catalyst to bring more parity into key public service positions." Since its inception over two decades ago, NHLA has advocated for increased representation of Latinos in the federal government. While Latinos are nearly 17 percent of the U.S. population, they are just 8 percent of the federal career workforce and as little as 3 percent of the employees in several federal agencies according to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Eleventh Annual Report on Hispanic Employment in the Federal Government. In addition, in years past, the NHLA Scorecard on Political Appointments has aimed to hold Presidential Administrations accountable for the appointment of Latinos. With a renewed sense of political power after the November 2012 elections, NHLA know that the Latino community is well-poised to play a more active role in government. "Latinos from across the country are ready to put their experience and expertise to work to help move our country forward," said Alex Padilla, president of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO). "NALEO is proud to work with NHLA to promote the appointment of Latino candidates with the skills and qualifications necessary to serve our country with distinction." Dr. Juan Andrade, President of the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI) said: "The goal is to ensure the Latino community is fostering a generation of professionals who are qualified to follow in the footsteps of former Cabinet Secretaries Ken Salazar, Hilda Solis, Bill Richardson, Federico Pena and others now and throughout Administrations to come" "The lack of Latinos in key decision making positions on the federal and state level prevents access to government and programs that contribute to their well-being and success," said LULAC National Executive Director Brent Wilkes. "The success of our nation is inextricably linked to the overall success of the Latino community." Jessica González-Rojas, Executive Director of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health added: "The absence of Hispanics, particularly Latinas, at all levels of government shortchanges the government's ability to produce policies that are inclusive, fair, and responsive to the concerns of our community." "On issues like the economy, education, health care and immigration, our federal government largely operates without the perspective of a community that encompasses about one in six Americans," said José Calderón, President of the Hispanic Federation. "Today's launch of the NHLA Latino Appointments Program is historic step forward toward ensuring that all Americans, including Latinos, have an equal voice in their government. Our country is rapidly changing and building a pipeline for Latinos to serve on this and future presidential administrations is vital to the success of our nation." Peter Reyes, President of the Hispanic

National Bar Association (HNBA) said, "HNBA is proud to be a part of this national coalition to increase the number of Latino candidates for political appointments. This is an important complement to our work on judicial and executive appointments and we strongly encourage our membership and that of our partners to enlist in this effort." "Together with NHLA, NACOPRW continues to open doors for Latinos to create positive change in our communities. Through our collaboration, we have created opportunities for Latinos to be part of Obama's administration through presidential appointments." Vilma Colom, National President, National Conference of Puerto Rican Women.

*National Hispanic Leadership Agenda. 6/5/13*

## **Inside the 2012 Latino Electorate**

A record 11.2 million Latinos voted in the 2012 presidential election, but Latinos' voter turnout rate continues to lag other groups significantly, according to an analysis of new Census Bureau data by the Pew Research Center. Overall, 48% of Hispanic eligible voters turned out to vote in 2012, down from 49.9% in 2008. By comparison, the 2012 voter turnout rate among blacks was 66.6% and among whites was 64.1%, both significantly higher than the turnout rate among Hispanics. Rapid growth of the nation's Latino population has fueled quick growth in the number of Latinos eligible to vote (U.S. citizen adults). Between 2008 and 2012, the number of Latino eligible voters grew from 19.5 million to 23.3 million—an increase of 19%. By contrast, the number of Latino voters increased by 15% over 2008. With the number of Latino voters growing more slowly than the number of Latino eligible voters, the Latino voter turnout rate declined between 2008 and 2012—despite a record turnout. The Pew Research analysis also finds that the Hispanic voter turnout rate declined for nearly all major Hispanic demographic subgroups with the exception of three. The voter turnout rate of naturalized Hispanic immigrants who arrived in the 1990s increased from 41.2% in 2008 to 47.2% in 2012. Among Hispanics ages 65 and older, the voter turnout rate increased from 56% in 2008 to 59.9% in 2012, mirroring a similar increase among all eligible voters ages 65 and older. And among Hispanic origin groups, the voter turnout rate of Puerto Ricans increased from 49.7% in 2008 to 52.8% in 2012. The analysis also finds that voter turnout rates differed widely among Latino demographic subgroups. In 2012, the highest voter turnout rates were among those with a college degree (70.8%) and among Cuban-origin Latinos (67.2%). Meanwhile, the lowest were among those ages 18 to 29 (36.9%) and those with less than a high school diploma (35.5%). Latinos were also a larger share of the nation's electorate in 2012, making up a record 8.4% of all voters, up from 7.4% in 2008. However, while 11.2 million Latinos voted in 2012, an even greater number—12.1 million—chose not to vote even though they were eligible to do so. Overall, among the nation's 82.1 million nonvoters in 2012, 15% were Latinos. Much of the growth in the number of Latino eligible voters was driven by Latino youth. Among the 3.8 million Latinos who became eligible to vote between 2008 and 2012, 3.7 million were U.S.-born young Hispanics who entered adulthood. Annually, about 800,000 U.S.-born young Hispanics come of age, making them newly eligible to vote ([Taylor, Gonzalez-Barrera, Passel and Lopez, 2012](#)). The number of Hispanics who say they were registered to vote in 2012 reached 13.7 million, up 18% over 2008. That was also a record. However, the voter turnout rate among Hispanic registered voters was lower in 2012 than in 2008—81.7% versus 84%. Overall, Hispanics made up 17.2% of the nation's population in 2012, 10.8% of eligible voters, but just 8.4% of all voters. Much of this

difference is driven by the relative youth of the nation's Hispanic population and the high number of non-citizen adults among its population (Taylor, Gonzalez-Barrera, Passel and Lopez, 2012). Just 43.9% of Hispanics are eligible to vote while more than half (51.7%) of Asians, 69.1% of blacks and 78.6% of whites are eligible to vote. In 2012, Latinos supported Barack Obama over Mitt Romney by a margin of 71% to 27% (Lopez and Taylor, 2012) and were an important part of the coalition that re-elected the president. As the electorate diversifies—with Latinos accounting for much of that change—the importance of the Latino vote will likely grow (Taylor, 2013). The U.S. electorate reached several milestones last year. According to the Census Bureau, 2012 was the first time that the black voter turnout rate<sup>1</sup>, exceeded that of whites (File, 2013), though there is some skepticism about when or if the black voter turnout rate surpassed the white voter turnout rate (Taylor and Lopez, 2013). In addition, the number of white voters declined for the second presidential election in a row, leading to a decline in the white voter turnout rate. One other finding from 2012 is the decline in the youth voter turnout rate. According to an analysis by the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, the voter turnout rate among those ages 18 to 29 declined from 51% in 2008 to 45% in 2012 (CIRCLE, 2013). The Latino community is diverse and that diversity is reflected in different levels of electoral participation. While voter participation for Latinos overall declined between 2008 and 2012, that wasn't true for all sub-groups of Latinos. Latinos who have a college degree and those who trace their family origins to Cuba had the highest voter turnout rates among Latino demographic sub-groups in 2012. Seven-in-ten (70.8%) Latinos with a college degree and 67.2% of Latinos of Cuban origin turned out to vote last year—both substantially higher than the 48% turnout rate among all Latinos. By contrast, some of the lowest voter turnout rates among Latino demographic subgroups were among those with less than a high school diploma (35.3%), young Latinos ages 18 to 29 (36.9%) and those who graduated from high school (39.4%). Voter turnout rates for just about all major sub-groups of Latinos were lower in 2012 than in 2008 with a few notable exceptions. For naturalized Latinos who arrived to the U.S. between 1990 and 1999, their voter turnout rate in 2012 increased 6 percentage points over 2008. For Latinos ages 65 and older, their voter turnout rate in 2012 was up 4 percentage points over 2008. For Latinos of Puerto Rican origin, their voter turnout rate in 2012 was up 3.1 percentage points over 2008. Among Latinos by country of origin group, Cubans were followed by Hispanics of Central or South American origin (57.1%), other Spanish origin (53.7%) and Puerto Rican origin (52.8%). Hispanics of Mexican origin had the lowest turnout rate—42.2%. Hispanic females voted at a higher rate than Hispanic males—49.8% versus 46.0%. And Hispanics who are naturalized citizens voted at a higher rate than Hispanics who are U.S.-born citizens—53.6% versus 46.1%. Finally among Hispanic immigrants, 58.8% of those who arrived before 1990 voted, while voter turnout rates were lower among those who arrived between 1990 and 1999 and those who arrived after 2000—47.2% and 44.1% respectively. Hispanic non-voters in 2012 differed in many ways compared with Hispanics who voted. Overall, Hispanic nonvoters were more likely to be male, young (ages 18 to 29), never married, have a high school education or less, to be of Mexican origin, have annual family incomes of less than \$50,000 a year and not be in the labor force compared with Hispanic voters. However, two large differences are evident between Latino nonvoters and Latino voters. The first is the relative youth of Latino nonvoters. Among them, 40% were under the age of 30. By contrast, among all Latino voters, only 25% were ages 18 to 29. The second is the Hispanic origin of nonvoters. Among Hispanic nonvoters, two-thirds (66%) were of Mexican origin in 2012. Among Hispanic voters, half (52%) were of Mexican origin. Hispanic nonvoters were also less likely than Hispanic voters to be Cuban (3%

versus 7%), Central or South American (13% versus 19%) or Puerto Rican (12% versus 14%). In 2012, Hispanic nonvoters also differed from other nonvoters. While 40% of Hispanic nonvoters were between ages 18 to 29, 31% of all nonvoters were in the same age group. And while 27% of Hispanic nonvoters did not have a high school diploma, just 16% of all nonvoters did not have a high school diploma. Overall, some 82 million U.S. eligible voters did not vote in 2012.

*Pew Hispanic Center. 6/3/13*

## **CHCI announces 36th annual Hispanic Heritage Month events**

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI), the nation's leading Hispanic leadership development and educational services organization, today announced September 30-October 2 as the dates for its 36th Annual Hispanic Heritage Month celebration in Washington, D.C. with the theme "Our Time: A Strong America." CHCI hosts the nation's premier events commemorating Hispanic Heritage Month (HHM), which draw more than 3,000 Latino leaders from across the country to its Public Policy Conference, Reyes of Comedy, and Annual Awards Gala in Washington, D.C. Registration for CHCI HHM events is now available at [www.chci.org](http://www.chci.org). Actress, producer, director and philanthropist **Salma Hayek Pinault** and lifelong educator **Dr. Juan Andrade, Jr.**, president of the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute, will receive CHCI's highest honors, the Medallion of Excellence, at the 36th Annual Awards Gala on October 2. "This year's Hispanic Heritage Month theme and events reflect the growing strength of our community and the tremendous impact Latinos will have on the future success of America," said **Rep. Ruben Hinojosa**, CHCI Chair. "The significant professional achievements of our Medallion winners, Salma Hayek Pinault and Dr. Andrade, and especially their passion for giving back to the community, symbolize how far Latinos have come and the positive impact we are having in making America a better place for all of us." CHCI's Medallion of Excellence awards are presented to an individual who conducts himself or herself in an exemplary manner and who serves as a role model and standard-bearer for the Latino community, particularly Latino youth. The individual must have at least a 15-year record of contributions and accomplishments in his/her field with solid leadership and community involvement. The qualifying factors are philanthropic and civic engagement through the initiation or support of programs that benefit the Hispanic community as a whole in the United States. Salma Hayek Pinault is an international superstar, not only for her Emmy-winning and Oscar nominated talent on and behind the screen, but also for her passion as a philanthropist and community activist. She is highly active in raising awareness about violence against women and discrimination against immigrants, and since the birth of her daughter, she has added campaigns helping children to her list of charity works through the Salma Hayek Foundation. Dr. Juan Andrade, Jr. is co-founder and president of the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI), which engages in nonpartisan civic participation to promote education, research, and leadership development. Originally from Brownwood, Texas, Dr. Andrade's strong work ethic and perseverance has taken him from picking cotton and working in meatpacking plants, to receiving the Presidential Citizens Medal from President Bill Clinton, and the National Ohtli Award from the Mexican government. CHCI kicks off its 2013 Hispanic Heritage Month events with its annual Public Policy Conference at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center on September 30-October 1. This year, CHCI Chair Rep. Hinojosa will be joined by administration officials, Congressional Hispanic Caucus members, and national experts and scholars to

participate in timely discussions of major policy issues affecting the Latino community. To complement the conference, CHCI's Ready to Lead (R2L) program educates and engages high school students in policy discussions while preparing them for college. On October 1, CHCI will hold its 13th Annual Reyes of Comedy. This popular event features both established Latino comedians as well as emerging Latino talent for a night of exceptional entertainment. This year's event is a sponsor benefit only and all proceeds support CHCI's youth leadership development programs. The closing and premier event of the conference is CHCI's 36th Annual Awards Gala. This prestigious dinner recognizes CHCI's highest honorees and celebrates the outstanding accomplishments of Latino leaders who are giving back to their communities. The Gala draws more than 2,500 guests including federal and local elected officials, corporate and nonprofit leaders, and celebrities. Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated annually from September 15 - October 15. For CHCI, it also represents an opportunity to feature its highly competitive and nationally acclaimed Latino youth leadership development programs, including two fellowship programs, a congressional internship program, scholarship awards, and a college readiness program, Ready to Lead (R2L) for high school students.

### **Important Dates**

**September 30-October 1:** Public Policy Conference

**September 30:** Ready to Lead (R2L)

**October 113th:** Annual Reyes of Comedy

**October 2:** CHCI 36th Annual Awards Gala

*All events at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center Washington, D.C.*

*Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. 5/21/13*

## **Eye on 2016? Ohio's Portman going to New Hampshire**

In what could be the first step toward a presidential run, Sen. Rob Portman will do an event with the New Hampshire Republican Party later this month. The Ohio Republican, who was on Mitt Romney's list of potential vice-president possibilities during the 2012 election, is considered a possible presidential hopeful. He'll be appearing in Salem on June 14. The news was first reported by the New Hampshire Union-Leader, which reported that Portman will join New Hampshire Sen. Kelly Ayotte at a private fundraiser that will cost \$250 a ticket. Portman, a spokesman said, reached out to Ayotte last week to let her know about the visit, and she suggested he host a fundraiser for the state party. The Portman spokesman said he will already be in the state to attend a Dartmouth College reunion that weekend and will participate in an American Politics panel as part of the class of 1978's reunion. Portman last visited the state on July 7, 2012, when he appeared at a state GOP fundraiser. That event was timed to a college visit for his daughter, and led to speculation that he might be in the state because it was close to Romney's Boston home and Wolfeboro, N.H., vacation home.

*Dayton Daily News. 6/4/13*

## **Ohio Tea Party infuriated by IRS disclosures**

While it's clear that Ohio Tea Party activists are fired up over recent disclosures that the Internal Revenue Service targeted conservative groups, what that will mean to politics in the state is still a little hazy. The investigation into IRS actions has given people opposed to big government and high taxes a rallying focus in recent weeks. The case has extra significance in Ohio because the key IRS office involved is in Cincinnati, and organizations such as the Ohio Liberty Coalition, Dayton Tea Party, and several other groups and activists are among those who complained about being subjected to extra scrutiny in their efforts to gain tax-exempt status. "The Obama Administration should have let sleeping dogs lie," said George Brunemann, a Cincinnati Tea Party leader who helped organize a forum Wednesday night that brought out hundreds of activists. "They have given people a new reason to be engaged. They were using the IRS as a hammer against us, and they got caught." The White House has said none of its senior officials was involved in the targeting, which occurred from 2010 to 2012. After helping Republicans win big in Ohio in 2010, including the governorship, the Tea Party saw a Democratic president carry their state in 2012 while GOP Treasurer Josh Mandel fell to Democrat Sherrod Brown in the U.S. Senate race. "Disappointment can lead to a decline in activity; this happens to a lot of groups," said University of Akron political scientist John Green. The IRS case has led to "a revival," Mr. Green said, but he added there had been renewed activity in Ohio by Tea Party leaders over other issues — aimed at state Republican leaders. Some Tea Party leaders and other activists are unhappy about GOP Gov. John Kasich's support for expansion of Medicaid coverage and a severance tax on the oil and gas industry. They are also upset over Republican U.S. Sen. Rob Portman's change of heart for same-sex marriage after he learned one of his sons is gay. Republican House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio has at times drawn Tea Party criticism on federal budget and debt issues. Tom Zawistowski, leader of the Portage County Tea Party in northeast Ohio, ran unsuccessfully in April against the Kasich-backed candidate for the Ohio Republican Party chairmanship. He said Mr. Kasich wouldn't have unseated Democratic Gov. Ted Strickland in 2010 without Tea Party help, and he said Tea Party activists think Mr. Kasich should be working to scuttle the Affordable Care Act instead of backing the Medicaid expansion. "People are angry," Mr. Zawistowski said. "If you don't think we can go elsewhere, wait and see," he said. If the governor doesn't bend, Mr. Zawistowski warned, he will oppose his re-election next year even "if the Democrats run Barack Obama for Ohio governor."

*Toledo Blade.* 6/6/13

## **Puerto Rican Lawyer speaks at the U.N. Decolonisation Committee seminar**

At a UN Decolonisation Committee seminar, Wilma Reveron, a Puerto Rican lawyer said that the U.S. has made it clear that they do not intend to allow a true exercise of self-determination in Puerto Rico. Reveron, who favours independence and is an expert on the political case of Puerto Rico at the UN, said the President Barack Obama's response to a local plebiscite held on November 6 confirms that this "was another exercise in futility for the people of Puerto Rico". "America does not evince the slightest intention of encouraging or permitting a true exercise of self-determination in Puerto Rico, as proven by 114 years of colonialism," she said. Reveron was invited to participate as an expert in the Regional Caribbean Seminar Committee on Decolonisation of the UN, which started yesterday and ends tomorrow in Quito, Ecuador. Although 54% of Puerto Rico voters rejected the extension of the current territorial status,

Obama has proposed that the government of Puerto Rico should order another plebiscite - to which the federal government allocated \$ 2.5 million- in which the Department of Justice of the United States would be limited to examining the constitutionality of the status alternatives agreed upon. In her presentation Reveron said Obama's strategy does not recognise the colonial nature of the political relationship of the Island, or the supervision of the international community and does not apply the "procedural and substantive principles of international law". Furthermore she highlighted the fact that the plebiscite would not be binding to the U.S. government and "does not provide an opportunity for the participation of the Puerto Rican community residing outside Puerto Rico who constitute the majority of Puerto Ricans today." "To participate in the plebiscite that President Obama now proposed would be playing by United States rules, accepting a process that does not comply with international law and which urges the people of Puerto Rico to a take decision without the precautionary measures provided by international law and education, without proper training and adequate supervision. "

*MercoPress. 5/29/13*

## **Armond Budish launches bid for Cuyahoga County executive -- with Ed FitzGerald there to endorse him**

After months of speculation, Armond Budish showed his cards Thursday and declared himself a candidate in next year's wide-open race for Cuyahoga County executive. And as it turns out, the state representative from Beachwood had an ace in the hole. Incumbent County Executive Ed FitzGerald, a fellow Democrat who is running for governor instead of a second term, endorsed Budish during a kickoff at the Ernst & Young Tower in Cleveland's redeveloped Flats East Bank neighborhood. FitzGerald is the county's first elected executive under a charter aimed to end an era of corruption. Some were surprised by his early endorsement, but FitzGerald said it was necessary to continue the work he started in 2011. "He has the integrity, he has the competence, he has the passion to do what's right," FitzGerald said of Budish. Budish chose the Ernst & Young building to tout his role as a leader in the legislature. Elected to his East Side seat in 2006, he served a term as speaker, then became minority leader after Republicans reclaimed the House in 2010. Budish, who is term-limited next year, said he helped secure public funds to finance the long-awaited Flats project. An attorney, Budish also hosts a local Sunday morning TV show aimed at senior citizens. He outlined four goals, three of which were commitments to economic development, education and regional collaboration. He also proposed an initiative to keep young workers in the region and attract others. "We are East Side, and we are West Side," said Budish, who will turn 60 next week. "We're urban, and we're suburban. We're small business, and we're working people. We're Democratic, and We're Republican. "We are 59 different cities, but we are all Northeast Ohioans. If we work together, our rich diversity can fundamentally improve our community for many generations to come. I'm running for Cuyahoga County executive because I know we have a tremendous opportunity to succeed as a region if we come together and build on our strengths." FitzGerald was not the only politician there to support Budish. U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur, a Toledo Democrat whose district reaches Cleveland's Wet Side, spoke at the event, as did State Rep. Sandra Williams of Cleveland. State Rep. Nickie Antonio of Lakewood and Cleveland City Councilmen Ken Johnson and Terrell Pruitt also attended. Ex-Sheriff Bob Reid, forced out by FitzGerald in January, is the only other Democrat

in the race. Those considering a run include County Council President C. Ellen Connally, State Sen. Shirley Smith and Eric Wobser, head of Ohio City's development agency. Reid, 61, promotes his executive experience. He served as city manager and police chief in Bedford before becoming sheriff. He offers that as a contrast between him and Budish. Asked about that contrast at his news conference, Budish, asserted that his term as House speaker amounted to executive experience. Reid said Thursday that he was surprised FitzGerald offered such an early endorsement. He later emailed the names of several suburban mayors he said support his bid, including Dan Pocek of Bedford and Mark Elliott of Brook Park. The Democratic nominee will be favored in next year's general election. Because FitzGerald is the county's most powerful Democrat, his blessing could be key for Budish if the local party decides to support a candidate in the primary. But FitzGerald's endorsement also could dent his hometown base in a county where Democrats are split among several factions, some of which might prefer someone other than Budish. The top leaders of Cleveland's black political establishment have not picked sides yet and might be waiting on Connally or Smith, both of whom are black. Budish has some support from that key bloc, including Williams and the two Cleveland councilmen. His website also lists endorsements from Warrensville Heights Mayor Brad Sellers and State Sen. Nina Turner. "It's risky, and I acknowledge it's risky," FitzGerald said when asked about his decision to endorse early. "The safest thing to do would have been to do nothing, but I didn't think that would be responsible. If that hurts me, so be it."

*Cleveland Plain Dealer. 5/30/13*

## **Proposed database would let Ohio taxpayers monitor state spending online, penny by penny**

A proposal to bolster transparency would let taxpayers track online every penny that Ohio's state government spends. The plan, pitched by Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel and backed by legislation from Rep. Mike Dovilla, calls for the treasurer to maintain a database on his office's Internet site that would allow free access to the data. "I believe transparency in government spending brings efficiency," Mandel said in an interview Wednesday. "By taking Ohio's checkbook and putting it on the Internet, it will essentially create an army of citizen auditors throughout the state." As envisioned, the treasurer's staff, which already maintains searchable salary databases online for public school teachers and state employees, would be charged with handling the new data site. Each expenditure made by state government through its dozens of departments and agencies, or by legislators and their staffs or other officeholders, would be posted to the site with information on the amount, the date it was made and the vendor who received the money. The database would be searchable, so visitors to the site would be able to sort the information to find out, for example, on what items the state spends the most money and which vendors doing business with Ohio government receive the most pay. The idea has wide-ranging support. Dovilla's legislation, which got its initial hearing before a House committee Tuesday, has bipartisan sponsorship. He hopes the bill could at least clear the Ohio House before summer recess. The Buckeye Institute for Public Policy Solutions, a conservative think tank in Columbus, which also posts online databases with salary information, backs the idea. It also has support from the more liberal Ohio Public Interest Research Group. Tabitha Woodruff, a public interest advocate for OPIRG, described the effort as a good move toward making government more transparent to the public. She noted her organization recently gave Ohio low marks compared to other states on

spending transparency. The plan “takes Ohio in the right direction by opening up the state’s checkbook to the public in a simple, user-friendly format,” she said. “While this legislation directly addresses some of the concerns ... Ohio still has a long way to go to become truly accountable to the taxpayers for how state dollars are spent.” Mandel said he thinks it could be done with existing staff and within his budget, but he also recognizes it will be a monumental task to set up. “The intricacies of taking this many expenditures and compiling them and sorting them is a complicated process,” he said -- one which will involve working with staffs of nearly every agency in state government to learn more about the specifics of how they make an expenditure. “Different agencies handle spending in different ways,” Mandel said. That is a lesson learned from setting up the database for public worker pay, where differences in how teachers were paid from how state workers were paid had to be ironed out. “It’s going to take a long while to get this done,” Mandel said. “Our hope would be to have the legislation passed and the online checkbook up and running by a year from now.” The administration has not taken a position on the idea or the legislation, but Dovilla, a Republican from Berea, said much of the information already is material the state tracks through its Office of Budget and Management. “Of course now you can use public records requests to get whatever information you like out of government,” he said. “This will make it readily accessible for folks on the Internet.” The scope of that effort is a reason to enact the program through legislation, Dovilla said. It establishes the effort as a part of Ohio law that must be kept up by the state treasurer’s office. The treasurer’s staff probably could take on the database as a project without legislation, Mandel said. “It’s the legislative action that ensures that this level of transparency continues beyond my administration.” Mandel envisions it as a tool with many uses, whether it be students looking at spending trends as they learn how government operates, or journalists doing investigative research or taxpayers watchdogging their public officials. It might also prompt those public officials to use it to elevate their own job performance, Mandel said. “I think when we hold public officials accountable for their spending decisions, it will make government more efficient.”

*Cleveland Plain Dealer.* 6/12/13

## **House refuses Senate budget changes, passes crime victim measure**

The House took a procedural step Wednesday toward finalizing the biennial budget by refusing Senate amendments to the measure to set the stage for conference committee deliberations. Representatives in an otherwise fairly noncontroversial session also endorsed a bill to fund Rape Crisis Centers with a new fine on sex offenders ([HB 108](#)) and passed five other measures. The unanimous vote to refuse concurrence on the budget ([HB 59](#)) was preceded by two speeches on proposals that were in [Gov. John Kasich](#)'s introduced version but subsequently removed by the House and not reinstated by the Senate: Medicaid expansion and an oil and gas severance tax. Medicaid expansion, or "reform" of the entitlement as the Republican majority is now characterizing their approach, nevertheless remains the subject of ongoing discussions. [Rep. Ron Amstutz](#) (R-Wooster), chairman of the House Finance & Appropriations Committee, told reporters he plans to introduce a bipartisan measure Wednesday that could be fast-tracked prior to summer recess. The conference committee on the budget, meanwhile, is slated to begin

Thursday with updated revenue and Medicaid caseload estimates. The chambers have targeted the week of June 25 for a final vote on the budget. Depending on when the conference committee finalizes its report, the House, which requires a layover for budget bills, could wrap up as late as June 27. [Speaker Bill Batchelder](#) (R-Medina) named as House conferees Rep. Amstutz, [Rep. Jeff McClain](#) (R-Upper Sandusky) and [Rep. Vernon Sykes](#) (D-Akron). The Senate conferees are [Sen. Scott Oelslager](#) (R-Canton), [Sen. Bill Coley](#) (R-Middletown) and [Sen. Tom Sawyer](#) (D-Akron). Prior to the unanimous vote against concurrence in the House, [Rep. Robert Hagan](#) (D-Youngstown) bemoaned the lack of a severance tax provision in the bill, saying it was especially disappointing given the past funding cuts to schools and local governments. By not taxing the industry like conservative-led states out west, the lawmaker said, taxpayers are in essence "propping up" oil and gas interests. "We're here to make sure that we provide a service," Rep. Hagan said. "We're a government not a corporation." Even though GOP majority leaders have stated frequently that Medicaid expansion will not be part of the budget, [Rep. Ron Young](#) (R-Leroy) made a plea for conferees to avoid inserting such language in the bill. Reciting now-familiar arguments in opposition to Gov. Kasich's proposal, the legislator said that given an individual with a part-time job working 30 hours per week would not qualify for Medicaid benefits under an expansion, policymakers should approach the issue by encouraging the poor to work instead of giving them "a new welfare program." "Our state budget is being consumed right now by Medicaid," Rep. Young said. "It's literally eating us alive." The rape crisis center measure, sponsored by [Rep. Nan Baker](#) (R-Westlake), would require sex offenders who register with the state's database to pay a \$100 fee toward the Rape Crisis Program Trust Fund. The bill would appropriate \$2 million to start the fund, which would be overseen by the attorney general, the sponsor said. The measure also updates the membership of the State Victims Assistance Advisory Council. Rep. Baker said there is a documented lack of services across the state for rape victims, and the current lack of financing puts victims at risk and has led to the closure of crisis centers in the state. "This bill will certainly help in that effort," she said. [Rep. Nickie Antonio](#) (D-Lakewood) and [Rep. Heather Bishoff](#) (D-Blacklick) also spoke in support of the measure, which passed unanimously. Rep. Antonio, while saying the bill brings the message that victims "lives matter," expressed concerns that anti-abortion advocates had the bill amended to prohibit funding to centers that provide medical services. Bishoff spoke briefly yet emotionally to the measure and lauded the bipartisan effort behind it. "People who commit these crimes need to pay," she said. Passing without debate was a bill sponsored by [Rep. Dorothy Pelanda](#) (R-Marysville) that would allow dog wardens to use tranquilizer guns to capture animals without the presence of a licensed veterinarian ([HB 116](#)). The measure would also allow for tranquilizer use prior to euthanizing animals, which the sponsor said can be dangerous for the people involved. The Ohio Pharmacy Board would oversee the additional licensing for dog wardens under the bill, Rep. Pelanda said. The House also unanimously passed an update to health care powers of attorney and related provisions that are part of a measure sponsored by [Rep. Stephanie Kunze](#) (R-Hilliard). The sponsor said he measure is a priority bill for the Ohio State Bar Association. In other business, the House also passed measures to: designate October as Dyslexia Awareness Month ([HB 97](#)); designate March as Career-Technical Education and Workforce Development Month ([HB 127](#)); urge federal officials to take quick action to reduce the processing time for veterans' benefits ([HCR 21](#)).

## **Rob Portman votes 'no' on farm bill, Sherrod Brown votes 'yes'**

Ohio's U.S. Sen. Rob Portman voted against the nearly \$1 trillion farm bill this evening. He said more reforms are needed to cut the food-stamp expansion that ramped up too high in recent years. Portman, a Republican, also said he disliked the continuation of certain commodity subsidies, singling out sugar for particular criticism. The long-awaited agriculture reauthorization bill passed anyway, 66-27, and will be debated in coming weeks by the House of Representatives. The House wants to cut the food stamp program even more -- \$20.5 billion over 10 years, to the Senate's proposed \$4 billion. "I had hoped to vote for this Farm Bill because I think there are some responsible reforms made to farm programs, such as dropping the outdated direct payments program, but more should have been done to trim back this \$972 billion bill," Portman said in a statement. "Unfortunately, despite my efforts to improve the bill by supporting numerous amendments, the Senate refused to end the counter-cyclical payments program which can encourage farmers to base production decisions on federal subsidy levels rather than a crop's market price." For example, he said, the bill retains the U.S. Department of Agriculture sugar program, "which has cost the country 127,000 jobs between 1997 and 2011." The program provides subsidies and sets import quotas. Sen. Sherrod Brown, a Democrat, voted for the bill. Although sugar growers prevailed in keeping their old subsidy program, Brown said the bill would finally curtail the practice with many other crops of giving money directly to farmers and rewarding them for not growing. This bill, he said, would save taxpayers \$24 billion. Brown has tried for several years to change the subsidy system to one that, he says, "relies on current crop-year data, market prices, and actual yields, making payments to farmers only when the market fails—and only for crops they have actually planted." "One in seven Ohio jobs is related to the food and agriculture industry," Brown said in a statement. "By eliminating direct payments, improving crop insurance, and boosting local food production and bio-based manufacturing, the Senate has taken the first step toward sending to the President a five-year farm bill." The bill establishes the amounts of money that Congress may appropriate for programs that encourage agriculture production and stabilize crop prices. It uses crop insurance, guarantees and other government controls to help farmers deal with fickle markets -- an irony that some otherwise small-government lawmakers have found acceptable because of the risks of uncertain weather and commodity yields that farm constituents would face otherwise. Yet the biggest single feature of the farm bill is supplemental nutrition aid, better known as food stamps. It accounts for 80 percent of the bill's cost. Many Republicans want to cut food stamps, saying the program gives out aid too easily and has enrolled some participants automatically. Portman said in May that 15 million additional people were added to the foods stamp rolls, a number greater than the population of Ohio, just in the last four years. Democrats say the program provides a crucial safety net and grew when the nation's economy grew brittle. Rep. Marcia Fudge, Democrat of Warrensville Heights, [aggressively defends the program](#). Senate Democrats said the \$4 billion in food stamp cuts in their bill will help deal with any abuses without making what they said are harmful cuts sought by the House. If the House version of the bill prevails, 2 million people

could be pushed out of the program and 1.8 million more will see reduced benefits, Fudge said recently. But Rep. Bob Gibbs, a Republican agriculture committee member from Ohio's Holmes County, said food stamp funding has increased 260 percent over the last ten years and the program has "become ripe for fraud and abuse."

*Cleveland Plain Dealer.* 6/10/13

## **Ohio plans program to help fund nonprofits**

Gov. John Kasich is moving forward with a plan to fund social-welfare programs through partnerships with private investors, administration officials said yesterday. The experimental model, called a social impact bond, is designed to offset state funding cuts by luring private companies to invest in successful nonprofits. Each bond would be a three-way agreement among the state government, a private investor and a nonprofit. The investor would give money upfront to expand the nonprofit with hope of getting a small cut of the state's savings if the project paid off. "It allows us to serve our citizens without taxpayer risk," Department of Aging Director Bonnie Kantor-Burman said. Administration officials are not discussing specific investments and said they don't plan to start talks with state lawmakers until the fall. Kantor-Burman said it is not clear whether the legislature would be involved in choosing projects or investors. Researchers say the bonds are designed to fix social problems such as high incarceration rates and homelessness. Those results can be tracked with data that investors rely on to make decisions. The bonds have been around since 2010 and have been used only in a few medium-size projects. Last year, Goldman Sachs invested \$10 million in a New York City program to curb prison recidivism. "We are still in the first wave of these, and the instrument has yet to be proven worthy of significant investment," said Kippy Joseph, associate director of the Rockefeller Foundation, which assists states interested in social impact bonds. Ohio was one of six states awarded a partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. The others are Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, New York and South Carolina.

*Columbus Dispatch.* 6/11/13

## **Yost to complete JobsOhio audit despite new restrictions**

State [Auditor Dave Yost](#) plans to complete an ongoing audit of JobsOhio, despite the legislature's recent move to block his office from reviewing the private non-profit corporation's books. Yost spokeswoman Carrie Bartunek said Monday that the agency had already received financial records it subpoenaed in March and planned to continue the fiscal year 2012 audit. "Of course we're going to do our job, and the fact is we already started this audit before the amendment happened because we got the records back in March," she said. A rider tacked onto otherwise non-controversial legislation that limits the auditor's ability to review JobsOhio funding ([SB 67](#)). Ms. Bartunek's comments came in response to prodding from [Rep. John Carney](#) (D-Columbus), a likely Democratic challenger, who called on the Republican to hurry up and audit JobsOhio before legislation that sped through the GOP-controlled legislature makes it impossible for the office to review the books. Rep. Carney noted that legislation, which doesn't take effect until Sept. 3 and asked Mr. Yost to audit documents that the Development Services

Agency and JobsOhio handed over in March in response to a subpoena. "Gov. Kasich and state lawmakers clearly believe you currently have the power to perform this audit, or they would not have passed SB67 to eliminate your ability to do so. You are the only person who can audit these records in the next few months, and can either reassure Ohioans that their money is being spent wisely, or come forward with any wrongdoing that you have found," the Democrat said in a letter to Mr. Yost. "If you are as troubled about SB67 as you have said publicly, I trust you will use the short time available to develop a full audit for the citizens of Ohio. Since there are only 85 days left, your office must act quickly to bring some fragment of accountability to JobsOhio, before it is entirely shielded from the public eye," Rep. Carney said. Mr. Yost recently incurred the ire of [Gov. John Kasich](#) and GOP legislative leaders, who charged the state auditor does not have the authority to investigate the private agency's finances. Ms. Bartunek said there was no specific timeframe to complete the JobsOhio audit and predicted it would require extra time because it's a new entity that the agency has never audited before. "It just depends on what you find and where it takes you." She dismissed Rep. Carney's request to fast-track the investigation. "There's no such thing as a hurry up audit. We're working on it, but we've got to do our due diligence and make sure that we do it properly. But when it is done, we'll report the findings publicly, just like we would any of the 5,700 other entities that we audit," she said. The recent legislation doesn't appear to address the 2012 audit and the agency is trying to determine whether it would preclude the release of the findings after the effective date, Ms. Bartunek said.

*Gongwer News Service. 6/10/13*

## **What does rural mean? Uncle Sam has more than a dozen answers**

[Lenoir](#) is a small town in western North Carolina. It has [18,000 people](#), a Wal-Mart, a Waffle House and an [annual parade](#) famous for people carrying pans of blackberry cobbler. Is it a rural place? The U.S. government has an answer: Yes. No. Yes. Yes. No. No. No. Yes. No. No. No. No. No. The problem is that the U.S. government has at least 15 official definitions of the word "rural," two of which apply only to Puerto Rico and parts of Hawaii. All of these definitions matter; they're used by various agencies to parcel out \$37 billion-plus in federal money for "rural development." And each one is different. In one program, for instance, "rural" is defined as any place with fewer than 50,000 residents. So Lenoir is rural, and eligible for money. But in another, only towns smaller than 2,500 residents are "rural." So Lenoir isn't, and isn't. And so on. There are 11 definitions of "rural" in use within the U.S. Department of Agriculture alone. "Sometimes we're in. Sometimes we're out," said Lane Bailey, the city manager in Lenoir. "We always have to check what our definition is for different grants. 'What are we this day?'" These varying definitions have become a baroque example of [redundancy and duplication in Washington](#). They mean extra costs for taxpayers — and extra hassle for small-town officials — as separate offices ask them the same question in up to 15 different ways. "If you were starting from a blank slate, providing one definition would be optimal," said [Doug O'Brien](#), the USDA official in charge of rural development programs. But optimal is not happening. This week, as soon as Monday, the Senate is expected to pass a bill that would pare down the list of definitions. Not down to one, however. Every year, there are billions available to fund projects in rural communities. Money for housing. Community centers. Sewer plants. Broadband connections. But what, exactly, is a rural area? Is there a single definition that could take in a Kansas wheat farm, a West Virginia coal town, a Vermont dairy and a Hawaii cattle ranch? "It's like, if I said

to you, ‘Give me a definition of love,’ ” said Gary Hart, the director of the [Center for Rural Health](#) at the University of North Dakota. “You wouldn’t give me one definition. You’d give me 20.” The list has grown in the way government duplication often does: one good intention at a time. Frequently, a new set of legislators or bureaucrats has set up a program to help rural communities, and has come up with its own definition of what “rural” ought to mean. But nobody bothers to erase the other definitions already on the books. Then, repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Today, the government’s official definitions of “rural” include one written in 1936: an area with fewer than 10,000 people. That one is still used to parcel out rural telecommunications grants. Another definition was written in 1949: any place with fewer than 2,500 people. It is used for housing-aid programs. These exist alongside other, different definitions: One sets the population limit for “rural” areas at 20,000. Another, at 25,000. Another, at 50,000. The result, for people in rural areas, is a government with multiple personalities, living in multiple realities at once. For instance: By Washington’s strictest definition of rural — any place with fewer than 2,500 residents — there are 59 million rural Americans. By its most expansive definition — any place with less than 50,000 residents — there are about 190 million, more than three times more. “Oh, my God. This doesn’t — this just doesn’t make sense,” said Kevin Sanchez, who runs a nonprofit [food bank](#) in northern California’s [Yolo County](#). Sanchez had a confusing run-in with the government’s thicket of definitions. He wanted a grant for a refrigerated truck to deliver food to people in outlying areas of the county. But there was a problem: At the end of the workday, Sanchez planned to park the truck at the food bank’s office in the county seat, Woodland — population 56,000. By this grant program’s definitions, the truck couldn’t be considered a rural project. “I said, ‘Yolo County’s rural. Period.’ ” Sanchez said. “They said ‘Well, gee. You know, [the town] is more than 20,000, so you really don’t qualify. Would you consider relocating the truck?’ ” If the truck were outside city limits, they explained, the definition wouldn’t be a problem. Sanchez didn’t apply for the money. “You go park a truck outside the town, and it ain’t gonna be there the next morning,” he said. In small-town [Shelby, N.C.](#), there was another problem with definitions. The operators of a proposed charter school wanted to apply for a rural-aid grant. Shelby has 20,300 people, which would make it “rural” under many federal definitions. But not, unfortunately, the one that mattered. The definitions had to be satisfied. But they couldn’t move the school. So they moved the town instead. Shelby “de-annexed” that plot of land, pulling back the city border so the school would be outside it. And officially rural. “Does it seem right, or fair?” asked [Shelby Mayor O. Stanhope Anthony III](#). “You know, probably not.” Now, the U.S. Senate is considering a farm bill that would knock six definitions off the list by settling on a single population cap for “rural” areas. The Senate bill decrees that any place that has fewer than 50,000 residents, and isn’t adjacent to a big city, should be counted as rural. That’s simpler. The USDA [supports](#) the idea. But in the House, both Republicans and Democrats have said the population cap is too high and the bill’s vision of “rural” is too expansive. By the Senate’s definition, for instance, the label “rural” would apply equally to [Harrisburg, Neb.](#), population 100, and [Harrisburg, Pa.](#), a busy state capital with a population of 49,279. The Senate bill would still give smaller places priority treatment. Even if Congress does knock six definitions off the list, in January a federal agency is planning to add a new one. The [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#) will begin using its own definition of “rural.” It’s based on a complicated measurement of urbanization and commuting patterns. So then, the question of whether Lenoir is rural would have yet another answer: Yes. No. Yes. Yes. No. No. No. Yes. No. No. No. No. No. And . . . no.

*Washington Post.* 6/8/13

## **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau launches site in Spanish**

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has created a Spanish language Web site, joining a growing list of online resources for Spanish-speaking consumers. You can find the resource here: <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/es/>. Latinos were especially hard hit by the financial crisis and are often the targets of financial scams, according to the bureau. So they may benefit from access to clear information about financial services. They are also more likely not to use a regular bank and to use alternative financial products like money transfers and payday loans. The site, CFPB en Español, is optimized for mobile use. Roughly two-thirds of Latinos who are online tend to go online using a mobile device, the bureau's director, Richard Cordray, said in prepared remarks about the new site. The site allows users to submit consumer complaints and offers answers to 250 common consumer questions on topics like paying for college, owning a home and sending money to another country. Other consumer-oriented finance sites have also added Spanish-language versions of their Web sites. The creator of the FICO score, for instance, the credit score used by most banks and lenders to gauge a consumer's creditworthiness, last year created a Spanish version of its "myFico" Web site for consumers.

*Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.* 6/7/13

## **State revenues jump again in May, beat estimates by \$165 million**

State budget stakeholders looking for positive signs heading into conference committee deliberations this month should be encouraged by the latest state revenue figures, which show tax intake now ahead of estimates for fiscal year 2013 by more than \$735 million. Majority GOP lawmakers have already stated that they would put any extra funds, should they become available when revenue estimates are updated for conferees, toward education and personal income tax cuts. The fact that [preliminary revenue totals](#) for May show tax intake beating projections by \$165 million for that month alone should bolster those aims. Last month's overage compared to estimates revised last summer were due mostly to personal income and sales taxes, both of which came in significantly higher than anticipated, according to the Office of Budget and Management. The \$730.4 million in PIT collections was \$88.6 million, or 13.8%, ahead of schedule. The \$760 million in sales taxes was \$63.7 million, or 9.2%, above estimates. The PIT, the rates for which majority Republicans are looking to reduce significantly before the budget bill ([HB 59](#)) is complete, accounts for a good portion of the year-to-date overage, OBM figures show. That category alone brought in \$8.6 billion through the first 11 months of the fiscal year - a total that's nearly \$520 million, or 6.4%, above projections. Fairly significant year-to-date overages compared to estimates are also seen in the corporate franchise tax (plus-\$129 million) and domestic insurance tax (plus-\$52.6 million). With one month remaining in the fiscal year, the \$19.31 billion total tax intake for the state is \$735.5 million, or 4%, better than OBM anticipated.

*Gongwer News Service.* 6/6/13

## **Ohio's budget surplus grows to \$2 billion**

State lawmakers will have a little more to spend while making final deliberations on the state's two-year budget, according to state revenue projections unveiled Tuesday afternoon. Both the Legislative Service Commission and state Office of the Budget and Management project greater revenues than previously estimated for the fiscal year ending this month and the next two years. The projections were presented to a panel of lawmakers who will decide which projections to use in finalizing the state budget bill, which has been reviewed, debated and revised several times since Gov. John Kasich introduced the plan in February. The Office of Budget and Management projections show an estimated state surplus of \$2 billion this year, up from \$1.6 billion projected in February. After accounting for transfers to the rainy day fund and other commitments, lawmakers would have about \$400 million to allocate in this final stage of budgeting, where two Republicans and one Democrat from each chamber hammer out their differences through what's called a committee on conference. The committee's chairman Rep. Ron Amstutz, R-Wooster, said lawmakers could have that compromise together by Monday or Tuesday, ready for full House and Senate votes later in the week ahead of the June 30 deadline for Kasich's signature. Lawmakers first have to decide which revenue projections to use during the next few days of discussion. And the surplus is largely from one-time money, which lawmakers have said should not go toward ongoing budget commitments. Legislators could use the projected surplus or find other revenue to implement an across-the-board personal income tax cut, which the Senate removed from the House-approved plan, in addition to a form of the personal income tax cut for small businesses and pass-through entities added by the Senate. "We're thinking about a more modest blending of the two rather than a simple math of adding," Amstutz told reporters after hearing the projections. "The challenge with doing both... is that it costs money that we don't have." Kasich wants that surplus to fund one-time personal income tax cuts, but told reporters earlier Tuesday that he's confident the final budget bill will include both tax cuts, which he proposed in February. "There are going to be tax cuts in this bill," Office of Budget and Management Director Tim Keen said. "How large those tax cuts are going to be will depend on what sort of tax reform elements that we're able to agree upon in the days ahead." Keen said the projected 2013 surplus was driven mostly by one-time events: \$500 million from JobsOhio for the lease of the state liquor enterprise, greater personal income tax revenue from taxpayers shifting income to their 2012 returns and excess commercial activity tax revenue. Sen. Tom Sawyer, D-Akron, questioned Keen whether income tax cuts were the greatest need for funding in the state. Keen said Kasich believes the greatest unmet need is increasing competitiveness and job growth and decreasing taxes would be the best way to meet that need. The OMB estimates not expanding Medicaid costs the state \$504 million in the next two years. Kasich pushed to expand Medicaid, the state- and federally-funded health insurance program for poor and disabled Ohioans, in his budget plan. The House removed it and doesn't plan to pass related legislation until after the budget.

*Dayton Daily News.* 6/19/13

## **Experts say final work on Ohio's budget will happen mostly behind closed doors**

The Ohio legislature's [evolving state budget](#) will move this week to a conference committee, where a select group of lawmakers must settle on a version for Gov. John Kasich's approval. Some members of the six-man committee -- four Republicans and two Democrats -- say their changes to the budget will be aired during open meetings. But experts on the process say the real negotiations will happen behind closed doors, while the public meetings will merely serve as a forum to reveal what's already been decided in private. Conference committee "has been a public process since the 1990s, but it has become more of a show than an actual process," said Brian Rothenberg, executive director of the liberal Progress Ohio. "What you have now are decisions being made before they even enter the room." House and Senate leaders chose the three top members from their respective finance committees to make final adjustments to the two-year, \$62 billion plan. Because Republicans dominate both the House and the Senate, they hold the majority on the committee, which is charged only with hammering out the differences between the House and Senate versions of the budget. The last bit of work on the hefty legislation rests on the shoulders of Reps. Ron Amstutz of Wooster, Jeff McClain of Upper Sandusky and Vernon Sykes of Akron, and Sens. Scott Oelslager of North Canton, Bill Coley of Southeast Ohio and Tom Sawyer of Akron. Sykes and Sawyer are the Democrats. Kasich must approve the budget by June 30. The conference committee will gather for its first public meeting Tuesday. The House and Senate finance committees, which toiled on the budget before sending the legislation to their respective floors for passage, did not debate the legislation during the open committee hearings, but used the meetings to unveil budget changes agreed upon outside the public's view. Greg Lawson, policy analyst for the conservative Buckeye Institute, said the conference committee's process will likely resemble that of both chambers' finance committees. "People will come and testify but, like the whole process, there is a lot that happens during internal conversations," Lawson said. "I would anticipate the main decisions will probably be internal." Oelslager, Republican chair of the Senate finance committee, argues the conference committee will operate in public, which it is compelled to do under Ohio's Sunshine Laws. He also said Kasich's administration will have an active role in the committee's work. "The governor's people will be very much involved in the discussion with us," Oelslager said. Jim Lynch, Kasich's budget communications advisor, said the administration will provide the committee on Tuesday with new economic forecasts and revenue updates. "The end goal is to have a budget that is ultimately supported and signed by the governor," Lynch said. "The administration will be extensively involved." The Republican governor in February rolled out a bold ["Jobs Budget 2.0"](#) that proposed expanding Medicaid to provide health care to about 275,000 of Ohio's working poor, and sought sweeping tax reform that would affect the pocketbooks of everyone in the state. "We think the governor got it more or less right in his budget," said Sawyer, adding that he believes Kasich will exert his will to transform the latest iteration of the budget into something that resembles more closely what the governor initially proposed. Kasich hoped to cut income taxes by 20 percent, expand the sales tax base to include previously untaxed services, and shave down the 5.5 percent sales-tax rate to 5 percent. He also proposed to slash in half taxes on small-business owners, and hike severance taxes on the state's largest oil and gas drillers. After nearly

two months of hearing public testimony and mulling over hundreds of amendments, [the GOP-controlled House swatted Kasich's plan](#). The chamber in April tossed the governor's Medicaid expansion and tax reforms and replaced them with a permanent 7 percent tax cut. House lawmakers also used their overhauled bill to resurrect a proposal shelved late last year by the Ohio Senate that would strip federal dollars from Planned Parenthood and other stand-alone family-planning clinics. The amendment would reprioritize allocations of federal family-planning dollars and ditch the current competitive grant process, placing health care providers like Planned Parenthood at the back of the line. The House's revamped budget then moved to the Republican-controlled Senate, where the weeks-long process began anew. The upper chamber earlier this month unveiled its version of the budget, which eschewed the House's cornerstone 7 percent tax-cut and reintroduced Kasich's small-business break. The Senate also tweaked the governor's per-pupil plan for education funding, boosting the amount from \$6.3 billion this school year to more than \$7 billion in 2014-2015. The chamber kept the House's family planning amendment and bolstered it with a proposal that would stop surgical facilities that perform or induce abortions from having transfer agreements with public hospitals. Because surgical facilities are required to have transfer agreements with hospitals, Planned Parenthood said it would be forced to seek agreements with private hospitals, which are often affiliated with religious groups opposed to abortion. Oelslager said the committee hopes to reach a compromise on the budget by June 25, giving lawmakers just a handful of days to labor over the legislation before it goes to the governor's office. "The conference committee is where the rubber meets the road," Lawson said. "Everything that has happened before now can change." Whether the public is privy to details of the process remains to be seen, said Catherine Turcer, policy analyst for Common Cause Ohio. "Will the committee just be a dog and pony show?" she asked. "I guess we'll find out."

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## **Ohio senators propose setting redistricting panel**

Senators in Ohio are proposing a measure that would set up a commission to redraw Ohio's political maps every decade. The lawmakers are scheduled to present details of their proposal Tuesday during a Senate committee hearing. The proposal creates the Ohio Redistricting Commission. It would include the governor, state auditor, secretary of state and four people appointed by legislative leaders – none of whom could be active lawmakers. The commission would be responsible for updating the state's congressional and legislative districts. The measure directs members of the commission to avoid splitting a county, municipal corporation, township or ward when drawing the maps. The proposal calls for all the commission's meetings to be open to the public and broadcast online.

*Cincinnati Enquirer*. 6/26/13

## **Poll: Kasich approval rating hits record high**

Gov. John Kasich's job approval rating has hit a record high, with voters giving him high marks due to the impression that the state's economy is improving, according to an [independent poll](#) released Tuesday. Mr. Kasich's approval rating stood at 54%, with a disapproval rating at 32%, according to the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute. The high ratings translated into notable leads over Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald, the only announced Democratic candidate for governor. The poll showed the governor with a 47%-33% edge over Mr. FitzGerald, and a 47%-36% lead over former Attorney General Richard Cordray, also a potential candidate. The survey said 49% of respondents said the governor should be re-elected, compared to 37% who said he shouldn't get a second term in office. "Ohio Gov. John Kasich's turnaround continues as he builds his reelection campaign," said Peter Brown, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute. "The number of people who think he is doing a good job continues to climb incrementally and his favorable/unfavorable ratio among voters is impressive. The only bright spot for Democrats in these numbers is that Kasich remains just below the magic 50 percent threshold when voters are asked if he deserves a second term in the governor's chair. But he is awfully close." The results are based on interviews with 941 registered voters between June 18 and 23. The results have a 3.2% margin of error.

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