



Week of Jan. 9, 2023

Tension surrounds future of House GOP, official business delayed

The political infighting and fallout in the House Republican Caucus continued to worsen this week despite attempts by House Speaker **Jason Stephens** to heal and unify his caucus ahead of the budget process. On the heels of a censure of Stephens and his supporters by the state central committee of the Ohio Republican Party, Rep. **Derek Merrin** invited 44 fellow House Republicans to a private meeting on Wednesday at the Statehouse to discuss their goals and priorities.

More than 30 legislators attended the nearly two-hour meeting, after which the coalition filed paperwork to reintroduce a previously failed proposal to increase the vote threshold needed to approve a state constitutional amendment from the current 50% to 60%. Speaker Stephens reportedly disapproves of the proposal.

With no kumbaya in sight, delays are being caused across the board. House leadership positions remain vacant, committee assignments are not decided and thus cannot convene, and key policy staff for the Speaker's office are unfilled. Without certainty on the future of the chamber's activities, many lawmakers remain in their districts. Further complicating the issue are the accusations and insults lobbed by both Stephens and Merrin supporters on social media in the press.

One item of progress this week was Stephens' selection of Brittney Colvin as his chief of staff. Coming from The Nature Conservancy, Colvin previously served as the legislative director for the Ohio Department of Education, in various legislative roles at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and as a policy advisor and legislative aide in the Ohio Senate.

Education agency overhaul bill returns as top Senate priority

Senate Bill (SB) 1 was introduced this week and revives the education agency overhaul provisions from last year's lame-duck legislative session (SB 178). Sen. **Andrew Brenner** said this bill was a priority for the Ohio Senate this year and will be passed either as a standalone measure or included in the state budget bill. Again sponsored by Sen. **Bill Reineke**, SB 1 includes a codification of the homeschooling provisions that currently exist in administrative rules and a procedure for the legislature to override a rule adopted by the education agency, among other changes. A first hearing on SB 1 will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 17 at 2:00 p.m. in the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee.

Funding simulations available from HB 45

House Bill 45 was signed into law last week by Gov. **Mike DeWine**, and includes an increase to 33% from 14% for the phase-in of the disadvantaged pupil impact aid (DPIA) component of the school-funding formula. It also modifies the transportation formula regarding weighted funding for community and chartered nonpublic school bus riders, among other changes.

District funding simulations of the funding changes are accessible at the bottom of this newsletter.

Education studies released

ODE released several education studies requested by the Fair School Funding Plan workgroup that were included in Senate Bill 310 in 2020. The studies include reports on College Credit Plus, ESCs, special education, gifted funding, among others. [Click here to access the studies.](#)

State Board of Education selects leaders

Paul LaRue and **Martha Manchester** on Tuesday were elected by their board member peers as president and vice president, respectively, of the State Board of Education.

Heard around the Statehouse

“I don’t think the lawsuit has any merit. I think the people who filed it know that it has little merit and it’s really a legislative negotiating tactic, which is meaningless to me.” - [Sen. Matt Huffman](#), on the pending EdChoice voucher lawsuit.

“I’m the leader of the House Republicans.” - Rep. [Derek Merrin](#), at a press conference after a private meeting of more than 30 fellow House Republicans.

“We should not have a dictator in the State of Ohio anymore.” - Rep. **Phil Plummer**, a Merrin ally, referring to Speaker Stephens at a press conference after the private meeting.

“Sounds like dip****s are running the insane asylum.” - Rep. [Jon Cross](#), a Stephens loyalist, referring to the censure of himself, Speaker Stephens, and fellow Stephens supporters by the state central committee.

“This guy is a baby. He’s a crybaby. He can’t take a loss.” - Rep. [Sara Carruthers](#), a Stephens loyalist, referring to Merrin.

Bills signed by Gov. DeWine

Gov. **Mike DeWine** recently signed several bills, including:

- [HB 458](#), which eliminates the August special election and establishes photo ID voting requirements, among other provisions.
- [HB 45](#), which includes a \$112 million appropriation for a third-round of school safety grants; an increase to 33% from 14% for the phase-in of the disadvantaged pupil impact aid (DPIA) component of the school-funding formula; a modification to the transportation formula regarding weighted funding for community and chartered nonpublic school bus riders; a \$1.75 billion appropriation to fulfill the penultimate federal disbursement of ARPA ESSER dollars; an increase in eligibility and the per-pupil payments to \$1,000 from \$500 for the Afterschool Child Enrichment account program; an elimination of the requirement to construct storm shelters in school buildings undergoing or about to undergo construction, alteration, repair, or maintenance; the restoration of schools’ ability to conduct raffles.
- [HB 554](#), which issues two-year temporary educator licenses to individuals with expired licenses and requires high schools to offer College Credit Plus students in military families who withdraw due to their parents’ stationing orders the option to complete the coursework or withdraw without academic or financial penalty, among others.
- [HB 66](#), which allows school districts to propose to renew an emergency property tax levy and a combination income and property tax levy in a single ballot question; provides a temporary period for Olentangy Local Schools to apply for abatement and remission of paid taxes, penalties, and interest for that tax year, payable to the person that paid them; and requires the state Tax Commissioner’s biennial report on state tax expenditures to include information on local property tax exemptions.