



### Week of Jan. 16, 2023

#### House to meet Tuesday, first time since speaker vote

The Ohio House of Representatives will meet Tuesday, Jan. 24 to adopt House rules, the first meeting since electing Rep. **Jason Stephens** as House Speaker. That vote ignited a major rift in the Ohio Republican Party, as Stephens bested Rep. **Derek Merrin** despite securing only one-third of his caucus' votes and then relying on the entire House Democratic caucus to win the position.

Fireworks are expected during the meeting, as Merrin and his allies have issued demands of Stephens, including 66% representation from Merrin loyalists in leadership positions and on committees. Stephens also must navigate the political optics when passing the rules package – normally, a formality – to ensure he receives votes from the Merrin camp and not repeat the way he became speaker: relying on House Democrats for passage and losing two-thirds of his caucus.

Prior to the session date's announcement, interactions between Stephens and Merrin camps continued to be bitter, contentious, and public as Merrin twice this week made waves. First, he denounced staffing decisions by Stephens for their relationship to ex-Rep. **Larry Householder**, and second, he and allies held a press conference to announce legislation geared at ethics reform, among other areas. Nevertheless, Tuesday's meeting may be the first hurdle Stephens and Merrin need to overcome in order to jumpstart the official legislative business for the 135th legislative session.

#### Education agency overhaul bill receives first hearing

[Senate Bill \(SB\) 1](#) received a [first hearing this week](#) with testimony from sponsor Sen. **Bill Reineke**. A second hearing on the bill will take place on Feb. 7, with an expected committee vote in late February or early March. Tony and Will are invited to a private, stakeholder meeting on Feb. 6 to discuss modifications to the bill with Sen. **Andrew Brenner** and Reineke.

Key additions to SB 1 from last session's SB 178 include:

- an authorization for the legislature to rescind or invalidate any administrative rule adopted by the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW);
- a prohibition on the DEW director and deputy directors from holding office for more than 45 days without being confirmed by the Ohio Senate.

Senate Republicans will attend their legislative retreat next week (Jan. 24-25) in Northeast Ohio and will return the following week to resume legislative activity.

#### State Rainy Day Fund at highest level in history

Ohio's Rainy Day Fund now totals nearly \$3.5 billion, up from \$2.7 billion, after a \$727 million fund transfer. This represents the largest cash reserves in Ohio history. Ohio law caps the fund at 8.5% of state general revenue fund reserves.

#### Heard around the Statehouse

"In this case, there's sort of this -- can I say 'three-headed monster?'" - Senate President **Matt Huffman**,

referring to the political dynamics of the House and Speaker **Jason Stephens**, rival Rep. **Derek Merrin**, and minority leader Rep. **Allison Russo**.

“Jason Stephens sold conservative policy. We're all against that.” -Rep. **Phil Plummer**.