



Week of September 11, 2023

Lawmakers return from summer recess

After a months-long recess, Ohio lawmakers are back in action deliberating on bills and attempting to redraw state legislative maps for next year's general election.

The House Primary and Secondary Education Committee met this week and adopted a substitute version of Senate Bill (SB) 49, which requires districts to allow students to take up to three excused religious expression days. The new version of the bill maintains that provision and includes the following provisions:

- prohibits the chronic absenteeism indicator of the state report card from including absences for which a student has a legitimate excuse;
- adjusts the report card's graded graduation rate measure by excluding from that measure students with individualized education programs (IEPs) who have satisfied the conditions for a high school diploma but opted not to receive a diploma and are still receiving education services;
- includes participation in scheduled 4-H and FFA activities or program as activities for which a legitimate absence may be excused.

Other bills heard by the committee include SB 17, which incorporates free market capitalism content into the high school financial literacy and entrepreneurship standards and model curriculum; HB 250, which revises the Military Enlistment diploma seal; and HB 235, which reduces the membership of the State Board of Education (SBOE) to 15 members, requires monthly public hearings for the board, and moves SBOE elections to a partisan ballot. The committee will not meet next week.

The House Ways and Means Committee amended House Bill 187, which employs a three-year smoothing of property values for reappraisal purposes. The amendments sunset the bill's provisions after three years and apply the changes to farmland property subject to current agricultural use value (CAUV). The committee will meet again next week and is expected to be amended again.

New state legislative maps

The Ohio Redistricting Commission met for the first time Wednesday hoping to meet an initial Sept. 22 deadline to adopt new state legislative district maps. Secretary of State Frank LaRose – a member of the Commission himself – has also prescribed a must-pass deadline of Oct. 23 in case the commission's work fails to meet the initial deadline. The Commission must approve maps soon in order for candidates to file their petitions in November. The commission's work is in temporarily on hold as legislative Republicans – specifically, rivals House Speaker **Jason Stephens** and Senate President **Matt Huffman** – cannot agree on which of the two will be the panel's GOP co-chair.

State report cards released

The Ohio Department of Education on Thursday released state report cards for public school districts

and schools. Statewide, nearly nine out of ten school districts met state standards, earning at least three stars on the new report card that features an overall star rating. Further analysis and details on report cards can be [accessed here](#).

Heard around the Statehouse

"What this new program has essentially done is removed a lot of the logistical problems." – Senate President **Matt Huffman**, referring to the universal eligibility expansion of EdChoice vouchers [in an interview](#) with the Columbus Dispatch.

"This program will grow," Huffman said. "I think it will grow exponentially in the next few years."
– President **Huffman**, again referring to the voucher expansion.

"We're looking at putting some checks and balances in place." – Rep. **Jay Edwards**, in reaction to the lack of accountability measures for voucher students in private schools.