



**Week of April 29, 2024**

**Speaker Stephens ousts six committee chairs**

In an unprecedented move, House Speaker **Jason Stephens** on Wednesday stripped six House Republicans of their committee chairmanships and removed them from the committees they chaired. Those removed were Reps. **Adam Bird** (Primary and Secondary Education), **Rodney Creech** (Agriculture), **Phil Plummer** (Constitutional Resolutions), **Darrell Kick** (Energy and Natural Resources), **Scott Lipps** (Public Health Policy), and **Marilyn John** (State and Local Government). While not indicated in [his memo to the House that announced the action](#), Stephens' decision appears to be a retaliatory response to those individuals' financial support of Republican primary candidates who were running against incumbent House Republicans in the March primary election. Committee chairmen receive an additional \$9,000 yearly stipend for that position.

No committee replacements have been made as of the publishing of this newsletter. A session of the full House is planned for May 8, though this week's actions may lead to a cancellation of that meeting.

**House committee passes bill that eliminates replacement levies, limits valuation challenges**

After six unsuccessful amendment modifications by the House Democrats, the House Ways and Means Committee on Tuesday passed [House Bill \(HB\) 344](#) on a 11-5, party-line vote. The bill, which eliminates replacement levies and limits school district's ability to file property valuation complaints, now heads to the Rules and Reference Committee where House Speaker **Jason Stephens** could place the bill on the agenda for the House's May 8 session. The bill was previously amended to (1) reduce the bill's financial penalty for illegally filing a complaint to become the court costs and attorney's fees, and (2) require a third-party complainant to file an affidavit stating whether they are or are not acting on behalf of a school district.

**Vote primed on residential property tax exemption changes; action needed**

A bill that modifies a statewide property tax exemption for residential development could be up for a vote on the Senate floor next week. The bill, [HB 50](#), is marked for a vote on Tuesday in the Senate Community Revitalization Committee, which could then be placed on the full Senate's agenda the following day.

Behind the change is Ohio Home Builders Association who claims the state Tax Commissioner is taking too long to approve requested exemptions. The bill now (1) requires property owners to submit their exemption application for approval to the county auditor, rather than rather the state Tax Commissioner, (2) prohibits school districts from challenging whether a residential development property is eligible for the property tax exemption, and (3) removes the notification requirement for school boards to be notified of an applied-for exemption. This exemption, which was created last year, creates a property tax exemption on unimproved land that is subdivided for development. It freezes the unimproved property's value at the time the exemption is granted and lasts for eight years or until construction begins on the property or the property is sold.

*Alliance members with unimproved land that is likely to be improved upon with residential housing developments are encouraged to contact your senators about the impact this change may have on your district and keep Tony and Will informed of your efforts.*

### **CCP bill receives proponent testimony in House committee**

A House bill that would split textbook costs for the College Credit Plus (CCP) program between schools and higher education institutions received proponent testimony in the House Higher Education Committee this week. [HB 219](#) would also implement many reforms recommended by Auditor of State **Keith Faber**, based on [a recent performance audit of CCP by his office](#). A representative from Auditor Faber's office testified in support of the bill, as well as statewide education associations and a local school superintendent. The key difference between [HB 219](#) and its Senate companion, [Senate Bill \(SB\) 104](#), is the Senate bill no longer includes the textbook cost-sharing provision.

### **Joint property tax committee hears testimony from local governments**

The Joint Committee on Property Tax Review and Reform met for the seventh time this week as representatives from the Ohio Township Association, County Commissioners of Ohio, Ohio Municipal League, and Ohio Mayors Alliance provided testimony to the committee. The committee meets next on May 8 for public testimony and again on May 22 for the final time.

### **Ohio Attorney General sues USDOE over new Title IX rules**

Ohio Attorney General **Dave Yost** on Tuesday [joined a federal lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education](#) over its recent Title IX rules that are set to take effect August 1. Yost joins several other states who have recently filed similar lawsuits challenging the new federal rulemaking action. Yost's filing, which resides in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky, joins Ohio with Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Virginia, and West Virginia as plaintiffs in the case.

### **On Tap – Next Week**

If the House does meet on May 8, there is a chance the House could concur in the Senate amendments to [HB 250](#), which requires school districts to adopt a policy on smartphone use by students, among other provisions. This provision does not apply to private schools. The House also could pass [HB 183](#), the same-sex bathroom bill, and [HB 344](#), the replacement levy and valuation complaint bill.

The following bills are up for a hearing in the Senate Education Committee:

- a possible vote on [SB 208](#), which mandates open enrollment policies for school districts when enrolling children from military families;
- all testimony on [HB 147](#), which modifies teacher licensure revocation provisions, teacher hiring practices, and classifications of conduct unbecoming to the teaching profession;
- proponent testimony on [SB 219](#), which restores the current two grade bands back to the previous three grade bands;
- sponsor testimony on [SB 128](#), which requires disclosure of the for-profit status of community school operators and post-secondary educational institutions on various promotional materials and contracts for employment.

Finally, the House Higher Education Committee is holding a third hearing on [HB 219](#), the CCP bill, and the House Finance Committee is holding sponsor testimony on [HB 312](#), the Regional Partnership Program legislation, and [HB 71](#), the Community Connectors Workforce Program legislation. Both [HB 312](#) and [HB 71](#) passed the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee last year but, because they contain an appropriation, they must be passed by the Finance Committee before advancing to the House floor.

### **Heard around the Statehouse**

"Chairmen should be trustworthy and operate with integrity. The trust has been broken. What members can trust them at this point?" - House Speaker **Jason Stephens** in a statement to reporters regarding his decision to remove six House Republicans from their committee chairmanships and from those committees they chaired.

“When school districts can sell their seats they lose their democratic qualities and become de facto private schools. Public schools should be free to all students, not just those whose families can afford to live there — or pay.” - **Jude Schwalbach**, an education policy analyst Reason Foundation, [arguing in an article for mandatory open enrollment policies for Ohio school districts](#), a policy proposal likely to appear in next year’s state budget bill.”

“This is great news!” - Sen. **Andrew Brenner**, [reacting to Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost’s filing](#) of the lawsuit on the recent Title IX rules.