



Sykes, Taylor Settle Lawsuit

The two candidates for state auditor reached a court-approved agreement over a federal lawsuit that charged one of the candidates was using racially-tinged polling.

As part of the settlement, Rep. Barbara Sykes (D-Akron) agreed to drop her lawsuit against Rep. Mary Taylor (R-Green), and Taylor's campaign has agreed to stop doing the "push poll" that launched the lawsuit.

Sykes sued Taylor in federal court after receiving complaints from some Ohio residents that they had received polling calls from a company representing the Taylor campaign. One of the questions asked if respondents would favor Sykes more or less if they knew she was the president of the Ohio Legislative Black Caucus.

Sykes' campaign charged the question was designed to make race a factor in the race, while Taylor's campaign said it was just to learn how much of a strength Sykes' leadership in the organization is.

U.S. District Judge James Gwin agreed to retain jurisdiction over the suit to make sure the terms of the agreement are followed. Gwin also dismissed the suit "with prejudice," meaning it can't be refiled.

In a statement, Taylor said she was pleased and said Sykes dismissed the lawsuit because there was no substance to back it up.

"I will continue to focus this campaign on my qualifications as a certified public accountant and my ideas for this important office to prevent the Tom Noe problems of the future. Ohio deserves more than political mudslinging from their statewide candidates," she said.

Democrats said the key to dropping the lawsuit is that Gwin still retains jurisdiction.

"We are pleased with the Taylor campaign's agreement to stop conducting issue polling, which

should keep them from using racial bias as a campaign tactic and conducting another push poll during this campaign," said Ohio Democratic Party Chairman Chris Redfern.

Issue 3 Supporters Dispute OBM Analysis

Proponents of Issue 3, the constitutional amendment on the November ballot that would place casinos at all Ohio racetracks (racinos) as well as permit two stand-alone gaming parlors in Cleveland, attacked numbers released by Ohio's Office of Budget and Management (OBM) in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Taxation (ODT) which indicated the "take" from the racinos would be only \$1.1 billion/year when fully operational compared to proponents' estimates of \$2.8 billion.

This difference translates to only \$324 million available a year for scholarships compared to supporters' estimate of \$853 million.

Calling OBM's analysis "fiction" and "trumped up" and saying that it is "based on shoddy math," Issue 3 spokesperson Linda Siefkas said the report was issued at the request of issue opponents Gov. Bob Taft and Secretary of State Ken Blackwell. "Politicians are hiding behind the veneer of a study by so-called experts to divert attention away from their lack of leadership in controlling run-away tuition costs.

"When you consider that Ohioans wager \$1.2 billion in surrounding states, it's laughable that these economists think it will evaporate overnight," Siefkas said. "Thankfully, the administration is changing next year and at least then we will have someone in the governor's office who can count."

However, according to OBM, its \$1.1 billion estimate was built on statistics from 43 casinos in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Missouri as well as Harrah's 2003 and 2006 "Profile of the American Casino Gambler."

As a result, OBM determined that 2.4 million Ohioans would visit the racinos an average of six times a year, resulting in an adjusted gross revenue of \$75 per admission.

This translates, per OBM, into a demand for 11,830 slot machines earning \$250 per machine per day -- 40 percent fewer than the 3,500 machines at each of nine sites provided for in the constitutional amendment. This is also much higher than the average of 1,357 slot machines at the 43 facilities.

OBM points out that the only way for the racinos to take in the \$2.8 billion would be for all 31,500 authorized machines to bring in \$247/day every day.

Other issues raised in the OBM analysis, which is available on the Ohio Capitol Connection website under the 2006 Election, include the following:

- "Based on the experiences of other states, it takes 12-18 months to get gambling venues operational" This means income will be much less than predicted in FY07 and FY08.
- OBM said, based on experiences in other states, lottery revenues are "likely to drop" four to five percent, reducing state revenue by \$100 to \$110 million and the funds to schools by \$27 to \$35 million per year.
- As held up in the Ohio Elections Commission on Thursday, the 55 percent going to racino owners is not subject to the commercial activities tax. (See [The Hannah Report, 10/05/06.](#))
- The racinos are not necessarily located in the most favorable locations plus many Ohioans live closer to casinos located in neighboring states.
- Under the amendment language, the college scholarships will first be distributed to seniors graduating in the Spring, 2009.

Besides \$324 million available for college scholarships, OBM's analysis said the rest of the \$1.1 billion would be distributed as follows:

- 55 percent or \$594 million to racino owners.
- Eight percent or \$86 million to local governments minus up to one percent or \$11 million for the Gaming Integrity Commission.
- Six percent or \$65 million for racetrack purses.
- One percent or \$11 million for gambling addictive services.

Blackwell Critic Rethinks Flat Tax Study

Policy Matters Ohio was forced to revise an earlier critique of Ken Blackwell's flat tax proposal Friday, noting a third of Ohioans would pay less to the state under a fixed rate, compared to the 16 percent associated with tax savings Monday. On the flip side, the previous analysis by the Washington-based Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) had suggested the greater majority of taxpayers would actually pay more under a flat rate of 3.25 percent -- a kind of tax hike with a disproportionate impact on the \$30,000 and \$70,000 income bracket -- compared to less than 50 percent under the revised study.

The snag, said chief analyst Zach Schiller of Policy Matters, arose in the income threshold for Blackwell's proposed tax amnesty. He noted the think tank's previous report had been based on \$10,000, the current cut-off for tax liability, whereas the secretary of state had followed Monday's announcement with a proposed threshold of \$20,000, narrowing the ratio between those paying more taxes and those paying none. The following table reflects ITEP's revised figures:

<u>Income Group</u>	<u>Lowest</u> <u>20%</u>	<u>Second</u> <u>20%</u>	<u>Middle</u> <u>20%</u>	<u>Fourth</u> <u>20%</u>	<u>Next</u> <u>15%</u>	<u>Next</u> <u>4%</u>	<u>Top</u> <u>1%</u>
<u>Income Range</u>	Under \$17,000	to \$30,000	to \$46,000	to \$71,000	to \$128,000		\$295,000 or more

(continued)

Average Income	\$10,000	\$23,000	\$38,000	\$57,000	\$91,000	\$180,000	\$762,000
Tax Change as % of Income	-0.3%	0.2%	0.5%	0.2%	-0.2%	-0.9%	-1.8%
Average Change in Tax Dollars	-\$26 (less)	+\$42 (more)	+\$187 (more)	+\$139 (more)	-\$145 (less)	-\$1,593 (less)	-\$13,805 (less)

The change in the lowest income bracket, however, did not affect Policy Matter's fundamental criticism of an apparent tax hike on the middle class -- now pegged at an estimated \$163 for singles or families earning \$30,000 to \$70,000 a year.

Moreover, said Policy Matters, a 3.25-percent flat tax would still offer the same advantages to the top one percent of wage earners in Ohio, who would purportedly enjoy a \$13,805 tax refund under the plan.

The Republican has challenged those claims, saying in fact that a middle-class family with two \$30,000 wage earners currently pays 3.3 percent in state taxes, compared the 3.25 percent under his plan.

Smoking Camps Look to November 7

The smoking debate turned the corner in the first days of autumn as opposing camps both qualified for the fall election after quibbling over petition signatures and ballot language since last spring. Assistant Secretary of State Monty Lobb gave final approval to the SmokeFreeOhio ban Thursday following certification of Smoke Less Ohio's Issue 4 last Wednesday.

Issue 5 supporters announced their continuing petition drive had established a 2,000-plus safety net to more than make up for 23,270 signatures thrown out by the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals last month, a decision still before the Supreme Court of Ohio.

"Issue 5 absolutely is on the ballot," said SmokeFreeOhio Co-Chair Tracy Sabetta. "Ohioans who believe they have a right to breathe smoke-free air should vote NO on Issue 4 and YES on Issue 5."

Sabetta reiterated the charge that R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. was attempting to confuse voters with the ballot positioning and reminded the public that a yes vote for both issues would trump an outright smoking ban, since the opposing Issue 4 is a constitutional amendment.

Meanwhile, Smoke Less Ohio was looking ahead Thursday with the announced support of over 400 small businesses, including Brew-Stirs, Gabby's, Nike Sports Lounge, and UA Pub in Columbus. They join a number of hospitality associations who are backing Issue 4, such as the Ohio Grocers Association and the Ohio Academy of Nursing Homes.

Republicans Challenging Dems' Residency Requirements

A political ad has been running in Franklin County by Republican Congressman Pat Tiberi (12th District) against his Democratic opponent Bob Shamansky in which he claims Shamansky has broken the residency law of Ohio based on Shamansky's ownership of several properties in the Columbus area.

The Franklin County Republican Party has filed a complaint with the county election board accusing Shamansky of voter fraud for claiming residence at one address for voting purposes while living at another.

The Akron Beacon Journal reported that Democratic gubernatorial candidate Ted Strickland's residency is also being challenged.

A registered Democrat in Columbiana County has challenged the board of elections claiming Strickland doesn't live at the Lisbon address where he is registered to vote.

The paper reports that the Columbiana County Board of Elections director has contacted her county prosecutor and the Ohio secretary of state to ascertain how to proceed with the complaint. [\(continued\)](#)

Strickland Campaign spokesperson Keith Dailey told Hannah News that Strickland passes all tests concerning Ohio's residency laws and he called the challenge "frivolous." Dailey said, "The Republican Party challenged thousands of voters in 2004 that didn't amount to anything."

James Lee, spokesperson for the secretary of state, said, "It is a function of a county board of election to determine the status of individual voters within their county. If there is a protest filed against the status of any voter then it would be up to that board to look at the evidence and decide if the person is lawfully registered."

Leading Indicators Released for August

According to the Department of Job and Family Services, the composite index of leading economic indicators for Ohio held steady at 97.1 in August.

This suggests that employment will level off after expected gains at the beginning of the fourth quarter. Initial claims for unemployment insurance decreased seasonally, while the valuation of permits for new housing construction and the average workweek of production workers in manufacturing increased in August.

Nonfarm wage and salary employment in Ohio decreased slightly to 5,457,800 jobs in August on a seasonally adjusted basis.

The national composite index of leading indicators declined 0.2 percent to 137.6 in August. This suggests economic growth will slow in the coming months.

In Ohio, initial claims for unemployment insurance decreased seasonally in August to 45,236 claims, and this was lower than the number of initial claims filed a year ago.

The valuation of permits for new housing construction increased in August to \$585,663 million, but this was lower than last year.

The average workweek of 41.5 hours for production workers in manufacturing was 0.3 hours longer than last month, but slightly shorter than last year.

The difference between 10-year and 1-year treasuries decreased in August to -0.20. The difference dropped from 0.39 percent a year ago.

Domestic auto production fell in August to 4.720 million units on an annual basis. This was lower than the production pace of last August.

Ohio National Board Certified Teachers to Meet

For the first time ever, hundreds of the state's top teachers will join Ohio policymakers and educational leaders for a day-long policy summit to discuss the most critical issues facing educators today -- closing achievement gaps and staffing high-needs schools.

"We're looking for concrete, workable recommendations that will foster the conditions for high-quality teaching and learning for all students," said OEA President Gary Allen. "Legislators need to hear what these accomplished teachers say about what is confronting teaching and learning in public schools. It is important that Ohio's National Board Certified Teachers step forward because their voices need to be heard."

The Ohio National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) Policy Summit will be held on Thurs., Nov. 16 at the Columbus Convention Center from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The summit will include in-depth discussions and recommendations that will be forwarded to state legislators, school boards and school administrators.

The summit is being convened by the Ohio Education Association, in partnership with the National Education Association, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), the Center for Teaching Quality based in North Carolina, the Ohio Federation of Teachers, the Buckeye Association of School Administrators, the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators, the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators, the Ohio Coalition of Board Certified Teachers, the Ohio Educator Standards Board,

the Ohio Department of Education, and the Ohio Board of Regents. Funding assistance is being provided by California Casualty, Horace Mann, NEA Member Benefits, and Saturn/UAW.

Currently, there are nearly 50,000 NBCTs in the United States. With more than 2,500 NBCTs teaching in Ohio's schools, the state ranks fifth in the country in the number of teachers who have achieved National Board Certification.

For more information about the summit visit the Ohio Education Association website at <http://www.ohea.org>.

Campaign Corner

Group Launches Website with Candidate Forum Listings

Ohioans for a Better Future, a group billing itself as a coalition of advocacy organizations "dedicated to making every Ohioan's vote and voice heard" announced it has launched a website that will feature election information such as candidate forums and updates on Ohio's new voting laws.

The website can be found at candidateneight.org.

Republican Party Returns Sykes Ad to Website

The Ohio Republican Party has put back up an attack ad against Democratic auditor candidate Barbara Sykes just days after it took it down.

The Ohio Channel had asked the GOP to remove the spot because it uses copyrighted footage of a House floor speech made by Sykes, a state representative of Akron.

Party Chairman Bob Bennett told the Columbus Dispatch that the party is entitled to show the ad because the footage is supported by taxpayer dollars.

League of Women's Voters Endorses Issue 5, Rejects Others

The Ohio League of Women Voters announced it has endorsed Issue 5, the SmokeFree indoor smoking ban, but said it rejected Issues 2 through 4 "because of language inappropriate for inclusion in the Ohio Constitution"

"The constitution should not be used to enact public policy," said Carol Gibson, co-president of the League of Women Voters of Ohio. "Legislation is the appropriate place for public policy because legislation is much more easily changed to reflect changes in context and public will."

The group didn't take a position on Issue 1, which would repeal portions of a law overhauling the workers' compensation system in the state.

National AFL-CIO President to Canvas Neighborhoods

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney -- joined by union members and congressional candidates -- will be going door-to-door in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Canton, Youngstown, Newark and Cincinnati to discuss economic issues. The AFL-CIO's mid-term election mobilization, the largest in its history, is focused on engaging more than 13 million voters in 32 states.

The Ohio Democratic congressional candidates who will join Sweeney are John Cranley (District 1), Charlie Wilson (District 6), Betty Sutton (District 13), Mary Jo Kilroy (District 15) and Zack Space (District 18).

Endorsements

- Sun Newspapers endorsed Greg Hartmann for secretary of state.
- The Dayton Daily News endorsed Richard Cordray for state treasurer.
- The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer endorsed Shirley Smith for the 21st Ohio Senate District.
- The Akron Beacon Journal endorsed William Healy II in the 52nd Ohio House District.

People in the News

Ohio School Boards Association Names Lewis Executive Director

The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) Board of Trustees has tapped interim executive director Richard Lewis to be the board's new permanent executive director.

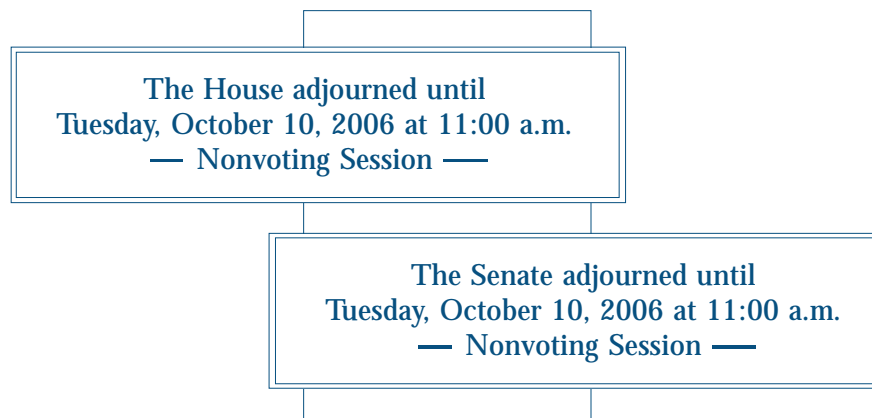
Lewis has been serving as the interim director since John M. Brandt retired earlier in July and was previously the group's deputy executive director. He has been with the OSBA since 1984, when he joined as a labor relations specialist. He has held numerous leadership positions within the association, including deputy director of information services, director of labor relations and management services, and director of communication and information services.

Lewis has bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration from Ohio University.

Bills Recently Effective

- HB279** HANDGUN IDENTIFICATION (HUGHES, J) To prohibit a person from changing, altering, removing, or obliterating the name of the manufacturer, model, manufacturer's serial number, or any other mark of identification on a handgun and to prohibit a person from possessing a handgun knowing or having reasonable cause to believe any such mark of identification on the handgun has been changed, altered, removed, or obliterated. EFFECTIVE 9/28/06
- HB294** FORECLOSURE PROCEDURES (KILBANE, S) To provide an expedited foreclosure procedure for lands that have had delinquent tax charges for a specified number of years and that are not occupied. EFFECTIVE 9/28/06
- HB311** DENTAL ASSISTANTS (WHITE, J) To allow a dental assistant to apply pit and fissure sealants under certain circumstances. EFFECTIVE 9/21/06
- HB368** DANCE HALLS (WOLPERT, L) To remove the prohibition against a minor being in a public dance hall unless accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. EFFECTIVE 9/21/06
- HB374** BLOCK PARENT PROGRAM (HUGHES, J) To abolish the children's safety program known as the Block Parent Program in the state Board of Education, to establish in its place the McGruff House Program in the Division of Criminal Justice Services of the Department of Public Safety, and to create the offense of unauthorized use of a McGruff house symbol. EFFECTIVE 9/28/06
- HB385** TOWNSHIPS (BRINKMAN, T) To make changes to the law authorizing a charge for certain multiple false fire alarms in townships, to increase the maximum registration fee for transient vendors in townships, to allow emergency resolutions to take immediate effect in limited home rule townships, to eliminate the ten-year duration limit and the competitive bidding requirements for township lighting contracts, to authorize boards of township trustees to sell cemetery related items to raise revenue for the care and maintenance of township cemeteries, to authorize urban townships to adopt a general parking authorization plan for subdivision entrances and certain township cul de sac streets, to remove the limitation on the number of additional deferred compensation programs townships may offer to township officers or employees, and to authorize a township to pay the proceeds from the sale of a permanent improvement into the township's general fund under certain circumstances. EFFECTIVE 9/21/06
- HB389** BICYCLES (SETZER, A) To revise certain laws as they relate to bicycle operation. EFFECTIVE 9/21/06
- HB390** TAXES (TAYLOR, M) To establish a statute of limitations for the collection of corporation franchise, sales and use, income and commercial activity taxes. EFFECTIVE 9/28/06
- HB393** EMANCIPATION DAY (PATTON, S) To designate September 22 as 'Emancipation Day.' EFFECTIVE 9/28/06 (bills continue)

- HB416** TRUST CODE (WAGONER, M) To adopt an Ohio trust code. EFFECTIVE 9/28/06
- HB422** SCHOOL SAFETY PLANS (HUGHES, J) To require community schools and chartered nonpublic schools to adopt school safety plans in the same manner as school districts, to exempt school safety plans and school building blueprints from the Public Records Law, to require all public and nonpublic schools to conduct at least one school safety drill annually, and to increase the fine for failure to conduct any required drill to one thousand dollars. EFFECTIVE 9/28/06
- SB131** SUNDAY LIQUOR SALES (MUMPER, L) To authorize certain Sunday liquor sales to begin at 11 a.m. even if these sales previously were approved by the voters to commence at 1 p.m., to change from 1 p.m. to 11 a.m. the time at which Sunday liquor sales may start as specified in certain local option questions submitted to the voters, to prohibit the sale, offering for sale, purchase, and use of alcohol vaporizing devices, and to allow opened bottles of wine that are purchased at restaurants to be transported in vehicles under certain conditions. EFFECTIVE 9/21/06
- SB227** HIGHWAY NAME (MUMPER, L) To designate a portion of State Route 423 within Marion County the 'Deputy Brandy Winfield Memorial Highway.' EFFECTIVE 9/28/06
- SB269** DONATED ITEMS (AMSTUTZ, R) To exempt from the use tax items held by a person, but not for that person's own use, and donated to a charitable organization. EFFECTIVE 9/21/06



Week In Review

Friday - October 6, 2006



AGRICULTURE

- The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) revoked the license of a Darke County milk producer after finding that its "herd-share" agreement was an attempt to evade laws against selling raw milk.
- The 7th Annual Ohio Farmland Preservation Summit will be held on Thurs., Nov. 2 at ODA's Bromfield Administration Building. Cost is \$40 and the registration deadline is Fri., Oct. 20.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

- The attorney general announced that the expansion of the CODIS DNA system to include DNA samples from all felons and certain misdemeanants has broken yet another cold case -- this time a 2003 murder.

BALLOT ISSUES

- The Ohio Elections Commission ruled that proposed casinos might indeed be considered "tax-free zones" as opponents charge.
- SmokeFreeOhio said its campaign materials will feature two messages: No on Issue 4, Yes on Issue 5.
- The secretary of state's office ruled this week that the petitions of Smoke Less Ohio were valid, rejecting a claim by rival SmokeFreeOhio that some of their petitions should be thrown out because they listed Smoke Less Ohio as the employer of the petitioner.
- Ohio's Catholic bishops announced their opposition to the gambling issue, Issue 3, while saying they were neutral on Issues 2, 4, and 5 -- the minimum wage and smoking issues.
- Smoke Less Ohio announced that 425 small business owners have joined its coalition in support of its constitutional amendment limiting smoke free areas and superseding local ordinances.

2006 CAMPAIGNS

- New campaign finance reports filed Wednesday show Democrat Ted Strickland continuing to lead Republican Ken Blackwell in fundraising for the governor's race.
- The third gubernatorial debate was held this week -- this time in Cincinnati. Neither Blackwell nor Strickland broke any new ground in terms of platforms or what they would do for the economy. However, when Blackwell commented, "I knew Roy Rogers [the cowboy star who came from Strickland's hometown of Duck Run] and he didn't duck and run," Strickland retorted, "I also knew Roy Rogers and I knew Ronald Reagan, and you are no Ronald Reagan."
- Ohio Supreme Court candidate Ben Espy said he won't accept contributions from companies or interest groups while they have a case before the court.
- Supreme Court candidate William O'Neill declined to meet with the Toledo Blade editorial board because, "I cannot accept the endorsement of a newspaper that has locked out 215 employees."
- Democrat Zack Space is leading State Sen. Joy Padgett in the 18th Congressional District race in a Reuters/Zogby Poll.
- Another Reuters/Zogby Poll put U.S. Sen. Mike DeWine tied with challenger Sherrod Brown at 41 percent with a margin of error of 4.1 percentage points.

EDUCATION

- The Ohio School Boards Association will place six resolutions to change its legislative platform before its Delegate Assembly on Nov. 19.
- According to Education Week the proposed changes in the way schools and states report data to the federal government on students' race and ethnicity "would make it extremely difficult, and sometimes impossible" to conduct research, monitor civil rights compliance, and enforce accountability. This is based on a study by the Harvard University Civil Rights Project.

ELECTIONS

- A second provision in Ohio's newest election reform law (**HB3-DeWine**) was struck down by a federal court. This one dealt with a provision allowing poll workers to demand written proof of a voter's naturalized status.
- The New York Times published a report saying that state Supreme Court justices generally sided with campaign contributors in cases nearly 70 percent of the time and that Ohio Justice Terrence O'Donnell 91 percent rate was more than any other justice.
- Elections complaints at both the state and federal levels abound:
 - Rep. Tom Patton (R-Strongsville) has filed two complaints with the Ohio Elections Commission against his opponent John Celebrezze for false statements and misleading information about an endorsement.
 - Another complaint filed -- this one by Rep. Ross McGregor (R-Springfield) against the Ohio Democratic Caucus Fund was found to have probable cause for misidentifying opponent Dale Henry and linking McGregor to job losses that occurred before he was appointed to the Ohio House.
 - The Franklin County Republican Party accused Democratic congressional candidate Bob Shamansky of lying about where he lives.
 - The Ohio Republican Party filed a complaint with the Federal Elections Commission that campaign material mailed by the Ohio Democratic Party fails to include the proper disclaimer.
- Ohio Honest Election and Jesse Jackson's Rainbow PUSH Coalition renewed allegations of a "systemic, premeditated statewide conspiracy" in the 2004 presidential election even as they prepare to file a lawsuit on new voter identification requirements.
- The Ohio Supreme Court ruled this week that it does not have jurisdiction in a campaign finance disclosure dispute brought by the Ohio Democratic Party against the secretary of state, explaining that the Ohio Elections Commission has exclusive original jurisdiction.
- U.S. Sen. Hilary Clinton (D-NY) will make another appearance in Ohio to campaign for U.S. Rep. Sherrod Brown (D) in his race for U.S. Senate while First Lady Laura Bush will attend a fundraiser for U.S. Rep. Steve Chabot's (R) reelection bid.

FEDERAL

- The fallout in Ohio from the revelations and resignation of U.S. Cong. Mark Foley (R-FL) over his sexually explicit emails to underage male pages continued throughout week. U.S. Rep. Deborah Pryce (R) announced she returned \$5,000 in contributions from Foley while Pat Tiberi (R) said he donated the money he received to two child abuse organizations. Rep. Steve Chabot is reviewing about \$3,000 in contributions and will likely donate it to charity. Other questions surfaced over what U.S. House Majority Leader and Ohio Rep. John Boehner knew when and what he did about it although in a letter posted on his website, Boehner said he did not know the extent of Foley's actions until last week.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- Sen. Marc Dann (D-Liberty Twp.) said he will introduce legislation that will give victims of child sexual abuse and other sexually-oriented crimes more time to seek justice from their abusers and those who may have covered-up for them.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

- The average daily cost of a private room in a nursing home in the United States is now \$75,190 a year or \$206 a day, according to the 2006 MetLife Market Survey of Nursing Home and Home Care Costs. Costs in Ohio are \$182/day in Cincinnati; \$196/day in Cleveland; and \$198/day in Columbus.
- Health care spending growth stayed in a "high-altitude holding pattern" in 2005 as costs per privately insured American grew 7.4 percent -- virtually the same rate of increase as the previous two years, according to a study by the Center for Studying Health System Change.
- Discussions in the Ohio Medicaid Administrative Study Council are growing more prickly as its deadline draws near for presenting its final report for creating a separate, stand alone Department of Medicaid. Issues around which there was no easy consensus this week dealt with the implementation deadline of July 1, 2007; the transition plan and funding; the plan for approving and producing the final report; coordination of the RFP for the Medicaid Information Technology System (MITS) with council recommendations; and the proposed format for the new department's budget.
- Ohio's Department of Aging received a three-year grant of \$850,000/year from the U.S. Administration on Aging for senior wellness programs.
- The Ohio Tobacco Prevention Foundation, following its name change from the Ohio Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Foundation, has launched a new website at www.otpf.org.

HIGHER EDUCATION

- The Ohio Board of Regents responded to a 15-point plan by the U.S. Department of Education to radically improve college performance, saying Ohio is already addressing five of the federal objectives.
- The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Ohio will host a conference for college leaders on preparing for the potential fallout of an avian flu pandemic in the operations of college campuses. The conference is set for Wed., Oct. 11 at Ohio Dominican University.

JUDICIAL

- In a 4-3 decision, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled in **State ex rel. Oriana House v. Montgomery** that private entities are not subject to provisions of the Ohio Public Records Act absent a showing by clear and convincing evidence that the private entity is the "functional equivalent" of a public office.

PENSION FUNDS

- Kathy Harrell, union president of the Fraternal Order of Police Queen City Lodge #69, was appointed to the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund Board of Trustees, replacing Lawrence Deck who died recently.

POLLS/STUDIES

- Policy Matters Ohio, using a state-by-state analysis from the national Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP), said in a new report that, "Replacing Ohio's graduated income tax with a flat, 3.25 percent tax [as proposed by Republican gubernatorial candidate Ken Blackwell] would increase taxes on most Ohioans, while costing the state nearly half a billion dollars in annual

revenue. Meanwhile, the richest Ohioans would reap thousands of dollars on average in annual tax savings apiece."

- A new report, "Reforming Ohio's Democracy: What's Wrong, What We Can Do About It," looks at a variety of issues its authors say erode public confidence in state government including the state's "pay to play" political culture, its propensity for gerrymandering legislative districts, problems with campaign finance plus the costs entailed in running and partisan elections administration, among others.
- The University of Cincinnati's Ohio Poll released a number of findings from its mid-September survey including the following:
 - Ohio's voters are split over which party will do a better job protecting the U.S. from terrorists.
 - A large majority of voters rate the state's economic conditions as "fair" to "poor."
- A poll by the Cleveland Plain Dealer published Sunday found Democrats leading in every statewide non-judicial race except for attorney general.
- A national coalition that monitors the influence of money in state Supreme Court elections said that 2006 is on track to be another record-breaking year in the amount of money raised and spent in the elections.
- U.S. Reps. Sherrod Brown (D) and Ted Strickland (D) continue to lead their races for U.S. Senate and Ohio governor respectively according to a new Zogby poll.
- A study by the Center for Digital Government placed Ohio third in the nation in its use of information technology.

STATE GOVERNMENT

- Ohio's sales tax continued its weak performance in September, running \$37.1 million under revised estimates for the month and \$60.2 million under through the first quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2007.
- The Ohio Parole Board denied clemency to cult killer Jeffrey Lundgren and upheld the Oct. 24, 2006 execution date.
- The 8.4 percent reduction in withholding for state income tax went into effect on Sun., Oct. 1. Added to the reduction of 4.2 percent that went into effect in January 2006, state income tax withholding has gone down a total of 12.6 percent this year, Gov. Bob Taft said.
- The Ohio Department of Commerce will hold a hearing on licensing requirements for historical boilers on Mon., Oct. 16 at 10 a.m.
- Gov. Bob Taft leaves Mon., Oct. 9 for his final trade mission and his second to Mexico. He will be accompanied by 44 representatives from 36 Ohio companies.
- Ohio Treasurer Jennette Bradley announced that the October BidOhio auction of interim state funds will net the state more than \$1.2 million in interest earnings.

TAXATION

- The Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement (SSUTA), a multi-state agreement providing for simplifying the nation's sales tax laws, is now in effect, marking the beginning of one of its key components, the amnesty program.

UTILITIES

- American Electric Power (AEP) said it has gone ahead and filed state environmental permit applications for clean-coal power plants in both Ohio and West Virginia as the company awaits regulatory approvals for cost recovery.

This Week in Ohio

Compiled by Hannah News Service and Ohio News Wire

Sunday, October 8

COLUMBUS -- The Quality High Schools Subcommittee of the State Board of Education meets at 4:30 p.m. at the Ohio School for the Deaf, 500 Morse Road. The full board hears a dinner presentation on the state budget request at 6 p.m.

Monday, October 9

BOWLING GREEN -- The Ohio Board of Regents sponsors a regional workshop on student success plans for representatives from 13 Northwest Ohio public and private colleges and universities from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. in 398 Bowen-Thompson Student Union on the university campus.

COLUMBUS -- The State Board of Education and its committees meet at the Ohio School for the Deaf, 500 Morse Road.

COLUMBUS -- The "Investing in Workers: Strategies to Grow Ohio's Economy" summit is held at the Hyatt Regency, 350 N. High St.

Tuesday, October 10

COLUMBUS -- The State Board of Education meets at the Ohio School for the Deaf, 500 Morse Road.

COLUMBUS -- The Ohio State Board of Pharmacy meets from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Vern Riffe Center, 77 S. High St. The Board holds a reciprocity hearing from 1-5 p.m. in the Vern Riffe Center, 77 S. High St.

COLUMBUS -- The School Employees Health Care Board holds a joint meeting with the Public Schools Health Care Advisory Committee from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Ohio School Boards Association, 8050 N. High St.

COLUMBUS -- The Unemployment Compensation Review Commission meets at 10 a.m. at 4300 E. 5th Ave., Suite 4318.

COLUMBUS -- The "Investing in Workers: Strategies to Grow Ohio's Economy" summit is held at the Hyatt Regency, 350 N. High St. Gubernatorial candidates Ted Strickland and Ken Blackwell are scheduled to participate in a forum from noon to 1:30 p.m.

COLUMBUS -- The Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review meets at 1:30 p.m. in the William McKinley Room (Room 121) of the Statehouse.

NEWARK -- The Ohio Tobacco Prevention Foundation Personnel Committee meets from 1:30-2:30 p.m. at Cherry Valley Lodge, 2299 Cherry Valley Road, Blossom Rooms 1-4. The Grants Subcommittee meets from 2-4 p.m. in Jubilee C Room. The full Board of Trustees holds a retreat from 3-9 p.m. in Blossom Rooms 1-4.

Wednesday, October 11

COLUMBUS -- The Ohio State Board of Pharmacy meets from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Vern Riffe Center, 77 S. High St., 31st Floor.

COLUMBUS -- The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio host a conference on the potential impact of an avian flu pandemic on the operations of college campuses from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Ohio Dominican University, 1216 Sunbury Road.

COLUMBUS -- The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio meets at 1:30 p.m. at 180 E. Broad St.

LEWIS CENTER -- The Ohio Economic Development Association holds its annual Economic Development Summit at the Conference Center at Northpointe, 9243 Columbus Pike.

NEWARK -- The Ohio Tobacco Prevention Foundation Board of Trustees meets from 8-9:30 a.m. at Cherry Valley Lodge, 2299 Cherry Valley Road, Blossom Rooms 1-4. The board holds a retreat from 9:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Blossom Rooms 1-4.

Thursday, October 12

COLUMBUS -- The Ohio Public Works Commission meets at 10 a.m. in the Ohio Water Development Authority conference room, 480 S. High St.

COLUMBUS -- The State Employment Relations Board meets at 10 a.m. the board offices, 65 E. State St., 12th Floor.

COLUMBUS -- The Unemployment Compensation Review Commission meets at 10 a.m. at 4300 E. 5th Ave., Suite 4318.

LEWIS CENTER -- The Ohio Economic Development Association holds its annual Economic Development Summit at the Conference Center at Northpointe, 9243 Columbus Pike. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Ted Strickland speaks at 10:30 a.m.

WORTHINGTON -- The Engineers Foundation of Ohio holds its 2006 Continuing Professional Development Conference at the Radisson Hotel Worthington, 7007 N. High St.

Friday, October 13

COLUMBUS -- The Voting Rights Revival Conference is held at 5 p.m. at Columbus State Community College, 550 E. Spring St., Nestor Hall.

LEWIS CENTER -- The Ohio Economic Development Association holds its annual Economic Development Summit at the Conference Center at Northpointe, 9243 Columbus Pike. Republican gubernatorial candidate Ken Blackwell speaks at 10:15 a.m.

WORTHINGTON -- The Engineers Foundation of Ohio holds its 2006 Continuing Professional Development Conference at the Radisson Hotel Worthington, 7007 N. High St.

Saturday, October 14

COLUMBUS -- The Voting Rights Revival Conference is held at Columbus State Community College, 550 E. Spring St., Nestor Hall.

COLUMBUS -- The Ohio Department of Administrative Services holds a state surplus vehicle auction at 10 a.m. at 4200 Surface Road.

Sunday, October 15

COLUMBUS -- The Voting Rights Revival Conference is held at Columbus State Community College, 550 E. Spring St., Nestor Hall.