



Ohio Township Association

Legislative Alert

March 27, 2020

Legislative Action This Week

COVID-19 Updates

Ohio General Assembly Passes COVID-19 Response

The Ohio Senate and House of Representatives passed a package of changes ([HB 197](#)) aimed at addressing issues related to the coronavirus outbreak. Here are the highlights for townships:

- *Public Meetings:* Authorizes public bodies to meet by electronic means (teleconference, video conference, or other electronic means), provided that the public body provides notice of the meeting and allows public access by similar electronic method, including but not limited to live-streaming, local radio, television, cable, or public access channels, or call in information for a teleconference. For a more detailed summary, please click [here](#).*
 - **There are many resources available to conduct these meetings. The OTA will be publishing information on our website. Please let us know if you need assistance.**
- *Extension of March 17th Election:* Extends absentee voting for the the March 17th primary election through April 28th. Voters may apply for an absentee ballot by noon on April 25th.
- *Drinking Water Access:* Allows the Ohio EPA to issue an order prohibiting public water systems from disconnecting customers and requiring that they restore service without fees to any customer disconnected as a result of nonpayment.*
- *Audit Changes:* Allows the Auditor of State to waive certain audit requirements for an audit period during the pandemic, including:
 - The requirement to conduct a standard financial audit after conducting an agreed-upon procedure audit in two consecutive audit periods; and
 - All criteria a public office is required to satisfy in order for the Auditor to conduct an agreed-upon procedure audit instead of a financial audit (currently, the Auditor may waive one criterion).
- *Waiving Fees:* Allows the Ohio Public Works Commission, Ohio Water Development Authority, and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to waive penalties and late fees associated with outstanding loans and other requirements.*
- *Unemployment Compensation Changes:* Makes several changes to qualifications for unemployment related to the coronavirus, including waiving the one week waiting period, waiving the requirement to be actively seeking work, and allowing these charges to be mutualized.*
- *Tax Compliance:* Expressly authorizes the Tax Commissioner to extend state tax filing and payment deadlines for the duration on the declared emergency and to waive associated interest and penalties for taxpayers. (Note: the federal income tax deadline has been moved to July 15th.)
- *Administrative Hearings:* The bill includes a provision regarding the tolling of administrative statutes of limitations, such as those that may relate to zoning hearings. Please work with your county prosecutor or legal counsel on how this provision might affect you.

*Many of these provisions are temporary during the state of emergency and sunset when the state of emergency is lifted or by December 1, 2020, whichever is sooner. These temporary provisions are marked with an asterisk.

Be sure to thank members of the General Assembly and the Governor for their attention to township issues during this process. The OTA will continue to update members on changes related to the coronavirus outbreak.

Congress Passes Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act

The federal government has also responded to the coronavirus outbreak with its third package of legislation, [HR 748](#). For a summary, please see below in the "Federal Update" section.

Bills Recently Introduced

[HB 563 EMT TRANSPORT - CONTAGIOUS PATIENT](#) (Ghanbari) - To require prompt notification of an emergency medical services worker who has treated or transported a patient who is presumptively positive for a contagious or infectious disease and to declare an emergency.

[HB 566 INCREASE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND DISTRIBUTION](#) (Rogers, Crossman) - To increase the percentage of revenue to the General Revenue Fund distributed to the Local Government Fund and to declare an emergency.

[HB 571 COVID-19 - OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE](#) (Boggs) - To make COVID-19 contracted by a peace officer, firefighter, or emergency medical worker an occupational disease under the Workers' Compensation Law under certain circumstances and to declare an emergency.

[HB 573 COVID-19 - OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE](#) (Sobecki, Boggs) - To make COVID-19 an occupational disease under the Workers' Compensation Law under certain circumstances and to declare an emergency.

[HB 574 TRANSFER FUNDS - UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION FUND](#) (Miller) - To transfer moneys to the Unemployment Compensation Special Administration Fund, to make an appropriation, and to declare an emergency.

[HB 575 COUNTY DROP BOX PAYMENTS](#) (Miller) - To permit counties to receive payments by a drop box instead of in-person for the duration of the Governor's COVID-19 emergency declaration and to declare an emergency.

[HB 576 SUSPEND HOMESTEAD INTEREST PENALTY, FORECLOSURE](#) (Rogers, Crossman) - To temporarily abate the charging of interest and penalties against tax-delinquent homesteads and suspend tax foreclosure proceedings and tax certificate sales regarding such homesteads and to declare an emergency.

[HB 581 ADDRESS COVID-19 CONCERNS](#) (Callender) - To address immediate concerns related to COVID-19.

[SB 294 ELECTIONS](#) (Huffman) - To extend absent voting by mail for the March 17, 2020, primary election to April 28, 2020, to make an appropriation, and to declare an emergency.

Training Opportunities

Ethics Training

Because so many people in public service are working from home due to the COVID19 crisis, the Ethics Commission wanted to make sure public employees and officials are aware of the online training options available to learn about the Ohio Ethics Law. Below are some upcoming opportunities:

- On **Friday, April 3rd at 10am**, the Commission will provide a one-hour webinar that will specifically outline potential missteps under the Ethics Law that could occur while

working from home. Register [here](#) for the April 3 webinar.

- On **Wednesday, April 15th at 2pm**, the webinar will provide a general overview of the Ethics Law. Register [here](#) for the April 15th webinar (scroll to the April 15th date to register for this class).

For more information, click [here](#).

Facebook

Join the Facebook Politics & Government Outreach Team to learn about tips and tools that State & Local Government partners can leverage on Facebook during this unprecedented time, and have your questions answered in real time. To sign up for one of the three training sessions we are offering, click the corresponding link below:

- Monday, March 30th 4:00 - 5:00 PM EDT [Register Here](#)
- Wednesday, April 1st 2:00 - 3:00 PM EDT [Register Here](#)
- Friday, April 3rd 12:00 - 1:00 PM EDT [Register Here](#)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Coronavirus - Latest Updates on State and Federal Law

Fishel Downey Albrecht & Riepenhoff - Attorneys at Law are offering a free update on recent law changes related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

- Tuesday, March 31st 11:00 AM [Register Here](#)

FEMA Updates

This [Fact Sheet](#) provides an overview of the FEMA Public Assistance application process for recipients and applicants requesting reimbursement related to federal emergency and major disaster declarations for Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). FEMA is simplifying the Public Assistance application and funding process to address the magnitude of this event and allow local officials to receive eligible funding more quickly.

For more information, visit FEMA's COVID-19 [page](#).

CDL Waivers

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) grants, until June 30, 2020, a waiver from certain regulations applicable to interstate and intrastate commercial driver's license (CDL) and commercial learner's permit (CLP) holders and to other interstate drivers operating commercial motor vehicles (CMVs). The Agency has initiated this action in response to the President's declaration of a national emergency under 42 U.S.C. § 5191(b) related to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

For more information, please click [here](#).

OHRAB Grant Extension

Due to COVID-19, the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board has extended its grant application deadline to April 30. These grants are for archival institutions to preserve and/or provide access to Ohio's historical records and are between \$500 and \$5,000.

Questions? Please contact:
Ron Davidson
Special Collections Librarian
Sandusky Library
419.625.3834
rdavidson@sanduskylib.org

Federal Update



Congressional Action

Just before midnight on March 25th, the Senate passed a \$2 trillion emergency package intended to stave off total economic collapse in the wake of the coronavirus crisis. The final vote was 96-0. The bill passed the House on Friday and the President has signaled he will sign the bill soon thereafter. The measure is the biggest economic rescue package in US history.

In addition to the details provided in [this summary](#), below are highlights of some specific policies and programs of particular interest to townships:

- ***State Stabilization Fund:*** The bill includes \$150 billion for a Coronavirus Relief Fund, which is essentially serving as a state stabilization fund. \$11 billion is directed to the District of Columbia, territories, and tribal governments. Of the remaining \$139 billion, local governments with populations over 500,000 or more can apply for their own direct funding, and smaller local governments must go through their states. The funds will be distributed to states using a population-based formula to determine the amount each state receives. No state will receive less than \$1.25 billion, including the direct funds sent to the larger local governments. The funds can only cover costs directly related to COVID-19 responses from March to the end of the 2020. The restrictions on spending mean the bill can help states with their additional costs but doesn't address the overall revenue losses they use to fund regular operations. NOTE: The bill stipulates that within 30 days of enactment the Treasury Secretary shall distribute funds to state and local governments.

Other notable provisions:

- ***Cash Payments:*** Lawmakers settled on a \$1,200 payout in tax rebate checks per individual, or \$2,400 per married couple filing jointly, with an additional \$500 per child. Benefits would start to phase down at \$75,000 adjusted gross income for individuals and \$150,000 for joint filers.
- ***Small Businesses:*** The bill provides about \$377 billion in loans, much of which would be forgiven if workers are kept on the payroll.
- ***Hospital Funds:*** Aid to hospitals increased in the final measure to about \$100 billion.
- ***FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund:*** FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund will receive \$45 billion. The funds will help state and local efforts with medical response, protective equipment, shelter, food, and services.
- ***Airport and Industry Aid:*** \$10 billion is directed to assist airports - commercial and general aviation. The airline industry ended up with \$32 billion in direct cash grants, in addition to \$29 billion in loans in the bill, after airline unions argued the companies would need to lay off employees without grants. Other struggling industries, such as hotels, would also receive aid. And \$17 billion in loans would go to "businesses critical to national security," including Boeing.
- ***Elections:*** States will receive \$400 million to help them prepare to hold elections during the pandemic.

2020 Census

All Your Information for the Upcoming 2020 Census

United States
Census
2020

The U.S. Census Bureau continues to carefully monitor the coronavirus

(COVID-19) situation and follow the guidance of federal, state and local health authorities. We are adjusting some operations as outlined below with two key principles in mind: protecting the health and safety of our staff and the public and fulfilling our statutory requirement to deliver the 2020 Census counts to the President on schedule.

As of today, over 5 million have responded online to the 2020 Census. Currently, the planned completion date for data collection for the 2020 Census is July 31, 2020, but that date can and will be adjusted if necessary as the situation dictates in order to achieve a complete and accurate count.

It has never been easier to respond on your own, whether online, over the phone or by mail - all without having to meet a census taker.

Learn more about these updates and ways to be counted [here](#).

[US Census Website](#)

[Ohio Census Website](#)

The 2020 Census is headed your way! And it's so important that your township gets an accurate count. This section will help you get information out to your friends and neighbors to ensure residents in your area are counted. Check here for weekly information and links to important documents and resources.

Ohio Township Association

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