



# Ohio Township Association Legislative Alert April 10, 2020

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## Legislative Action This Week

### **COVID-19 Updates**

#### **House Creates Economic Recovery Task Force**

Speaker Householder appointed a 24-member task force to facilitate the restoration of Ohio's economy, which had its first virtual meetings this week. The goal is to have recommendations as early as the end of next week.

The OTA provided a [list of requests](#) to state leaders regarding the challenges associated with COVID-19.

#### **BWC Will Send Dividend Payments to Employers**

Governor DeWine has directed the BWC to send up to \$1.6 billion in dividends to Ohio employers to ease the impact of the public health crisis. If approved by the BWC's board, \$1.4 billion will go to private employers, while another \$200 million will be directed at local governments.

You can read more about these payments [here](#) and find a BWC COVID-19 FAQ [here](#).

#### **OBM Releases State Revenue Results**

The Office of Budget and Management has released tax receipts for the month of March, showing the effects of COVID-19 already. Overall tax receipts were down 10.5% from estimates and sales tax was down 9.7%, the most immediate indicator of impact. The OTA encourages townships to be mindful of these changing dynamics and potential revenue losses.

#### **OTA Website**

The OTA has compiled relevant coronavirus-related information on our [website](#) in a format that is more easily accessible.

The "COVID-19" page, located on the website's main banner, has five subcategories for Legislative Information, Open Meetings Act Changes, Remote Meeting Tools, Resources for Constituent Distribution, and Township Resource Links.

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## Bills Recently Introduced

[HB 598 EMERGENCY AUTHORIZATION - MEDICAL TECHNICIANS](#) (Blair, O'Brien) - To temporarily authorize emergency medical technicians to perform certain medical services in hospitals and to declare an emergency.

[HB 599 NOTIFICATION - COVID-19 EMS, FUNERAL WORKERS](#) (Blair, O'Brien) - To require, during the period of the emergency declared by Executive Order 2020-01D issued on March 9, 2020, and for six months thereafter, prompt notification of an emergency medical services worker or funeral services worker who has treated, handled, or transported a patient who tested positive for COVID-19 and to declare an emergency.

[HB 600 AMBULANCE LICENSE EXPANSION](#) (Blair, O'Brien) - To authorize a person who has had a valid commercial driver's license to drive an ambulance during the state of emergency due

to COVID-19 and to declare an emergency.

[HB 602 PROPERTY TAX FORECLOSURE NOTICES](#) (Rogers, Lipps) - To modify the manner in which property tax foreclosure notices may be published.

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## OTA/OSU Zoom 101 Webinar

The OTA, in collaboration with OSU Extension - Community Development, put together a webinar on electronic meetings with a basic tutorial on using Zoom for townships that may need assistance getting started. Below are links to the webinar and materials presented in the video.

- [OTA/OSU Zoom 101 Webinar](#)
  - [Electronic Meetings Best Practices](#)
  - [Open Meetings Act Changes and HB 197](#)
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## Electronic Signatures Clarification

The Auditor of State has offered the following clarification for use of electronic signatures during the pandemic:

*Q: Can elected officials sign resolutions and other official documents electronically during the COVID-19 emergency?*

*A: Ohio Revised Code Chapter 9 allows for facsimile signatures on checks, warrants, vouchers, and other documents for the payment of money. The Code does not address electronic or other signatures on resolutions and actions taken during public and official meetings. Since Section 12 of House Bill 197 states that "any resolution, rule, or formal action of any kind shall have the same effect as if it had occurred during an open meeting or hearing of the public body," these documents are official and valid in the same way they would be at an in-person meeting. Under O.R.C. 1306.06 a signature may not be denied legal effect solely because it is in electronic form. O.R.C. 1306.06(D) further states "[i]f a law requires a signature, an electronic signature satisfies the law." Therefore, officials may electronically sign official documents. It is strongly recommended that local officials notify their clerk in writing when an electronic signature is allowed to be used on an official document.*

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## AG Resources

During the current pandemic, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has issued several orders to protect the health and safety of Ohioans. However, because of the general nature of each order, a variety of questions have arisen as to the scope and applicability of these orders to both individuals and businesses. The Ohio Attorney General's Office wants to help.

So far, the AG's office is supporting ODH by contacting businesses thought to be in violation of ODH's orders and requesting more information. The AG's office is sensitive that many local officials, including local sheriffs, police, and prosecutors, are also receiving these same inquiries. This week the AG's office activated a publicly available website that will contain a formalized process for individuals who wish to forward tips to their office. That website can be found [here](#).

It is important to note that this site is not intended to be a catch-all for every tip or complaint. Many tips regarding alleged violations are still best handled by local law enforcement and health departments. However, if there is an allegation of widespread abuse or violations of an ODH order in multiple jurisdictions, we are happy to review those tips and assist if possible.

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# USDA Help for Rural Communities

## **USDA Implements Immediate Measures to Help Rural Residents, Businesses, and Communities Affected by COVID-19**

USDA Rural Development has taken a number of immediate actions to help rural residents, businesses, and communities affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Rural Development will keep customers, partners, and stakeholders continuously updated as more actions are taken to better serve rural America.

[This document](#) includes updates for Rural Development Guaranteed Loan Programs, Rural Housing Service, and the Rural Business-Cooperative Service.

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## Ethics Commission Newsletter

The newest edition of "The Voice of Ethics" is now available from the Ohio Ethics Commission. You can read it [here](#).

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## Federal Update



### ***Congressional Action***

The House and Senate were both in recess this week. The Senate will remain in recess until Monday, April 20th, while the House does not yet have a fixed return date.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), in a [Dear Colleague letter](#) sent out on Saturday, stated that, "We must double down on the down-payment we made in the CARES Act by passing a CARES 2 package, which will extend and expand this bipartisan legislation to meet the needs of the American people. CARES 2 must go further in assisting small businesses including farmers, extending and strengthening unemployment benefits and giving families additional direct payments. We must also provide the desperately needed resources for our state and local governments, hospitals, community health centers, health systems and health workers, first responders and other providers on the frontlines of this crisis. [...] It is my hope that we will craft this legislation and bring it to the Floor later this month." This represents a shift away from a broader, infrastructure-focused "Phase 4" package to deal with the coronavirus outbreak, which seemed to be the trajectory that Speaker Pelosi was on for the legislation up until last week. She will, however, likely pursue this type of infrastructure-heavy legislation in a Phase 5 package later in the year.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) also [announced](#) last week that there will be a fourth coronavirus bill and that health care should be a top priority as lawmakers draft the legislation. However, he also stated that he is not in favor of "rushing" a fourth stimulus just yet. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) said on Monday that "we are definitely going to need a COVID four and I think it's going to have to be big and bold because the problem is so huge."

NATaT has created a [Coronavirus Guidance webpage](#) to store NATaT letters, memos and briefs on the outbreak, as well as critical information and guidance released by Congress and the Administration.

### ***Rural Broadband Grant Bill Introduced***

Reps. Rob Wittman (R-VA) and Bill Johnson (R-OH) have proposed a bill, [H.R. 6456](#), to create a five-year, \$500 million broadband pilot grant program to be administered by the FCC, with support limited to one provider in each service area, which would have to partner "with a locality, city, county, wireless authority, or planning district commission to ensure the needs and input of residents are included."

### ***Small Cities and Towns Investment Act Introduced***

Rep. Angie Craig (D-MN) introduced the Small Cities and Towns Investment Act ([H.R. 6459](#)) to

provide small cities, towns, and townships with a new grant program that would allow them to invest in their communities and stimulate their economies following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Small Cities and Towns Investment Act would begin to address this problem by injecting additional block grant money directly to small cities, towns and other units of local government. The bill aims to increase funding from USDA Rural Development for a number of public needs such as improving essential community facilities, health care facilities, public transportation, child care centers, community centers, broadband and far more. Towns with a population of 30,000 and under could apply to the \$10 billion grant program.

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## 2020 Census



### **All Your Information for the Upcoming 2020 Census**

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.

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### **Ohio Township Association**

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