

Statehouse

Since we last reported, Governor DeWine has signed HB 214 into law (article below), a bill to require boards of education to adopt a policy prohibiting the district from forcing staff and students to ascribe to specific beliefs, etc. That bill was amended late in the legislative process to include the provisions from SB 49, a measure to allow students three Religious Expression Days (excused). Districts will be required to adopt a policy that reasonably accommodates the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of students. The bill's effective date is October 23, 2024.

This week the National Conference of State Legislatures held a conference in Louisville, Kentucky. A handful of articles below describe some of the topics related to education that were highlighted at the conference.

On Tuesday this week, a Franklin County judge lifted the temporary hold on the implementation of HB 68, a bill to prohibit gender affirming care for minors (stories below). The bill also contains the provisions from HB 6, the "Save Womens Sports Act." The ACLU quickly responded by saying they will appeal this week's ruling.

In other news, the Office of Budget and Management has issued budget guidance and deadlines for agencies to submit budget requests for FY 2026-2027. This information will be utilized by Governor DeWine as he submits his proposed budget to the General Assembly in early 2025.

Legislative reports for the summer will be sporadic based on any news that becomes available. Meanwhile, if you have questions or need more information about the topics in this update or other legislative matters, please do not hesitate to contact us. Barbara.shaner@hcesc.org

At the end of this report, we have included a status sheet (courtesy of the Gongwer News Service) for the education bills we are tracking in the 135th General Assembly.

News at a Glance (more details below):

News August 5 – August 8

High Court Orders Teacher Reinstated After Flawed Evaluation Process: A northeast Ohio school district violated state law when it failed to provide three formal observations before declining to renew an educator's contract, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled.

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AG Predicts Transgender Case Will Reach High Court: Attorney General Dave Yost on Wednesday welcomed the ACLU of Ohio's planned appeal of a court ruling allowing the enforcement of a controversial law.

NCSL: Lawmakers Encouraged To Allow Schools To Experiment: Panelists told policymakers to eschew traditional, one-size-fits-all approaches to education amid societal shifts and advances in technology during a discussion at a legislative conference.

NCSL: Tax Policy, Education Among Top Issues, Fiscal Analysts Say: LOUISVILLE, Ky. – Tax policy, K-12 education funding and housing are among this year's top issues noted by state fiscal analysts across the country.

SCOTUS Cases On Transgender Care, Pornography Could Impact Ohio: At least two cases before the nation's highest court in its next term could have major implications for Ohio.

News July 26 – August 2

Plethora Of K-12 Policy Changes Get Governor's Signature: Students and parents are not the only Ohioans getting into the back-to-school spirit.

K-12 Administrators Urge High Court To Reverse Ruling: Ohio school boards will have too much leeway to terminate administrators without intervention from the Ohio Supreme Court, according to two statewide groups.

School Safety Center Takes Holistic Approach, DeWine Says: As schools prepare to reopen their doors for the new year, Gov. Mike DeWine is encouraging school staff, mental health professionals and first responders to consider not just violence in their safety plans, but also mental health, AEDs, vaping and bullying.

Yost Rejects Property Tax Amendment Summary: Backers of a proposed constitutional amendment regarding the homestead exemption and personal property taxes did not gather enough voter signatures to start the process, Attorney General Dave Yost announced Wednesday.

Legislative Tracking Status Report

News

News August 5 – August 8

High Court Orders Teacher Reinstated After Flawed Evaluation Process: A northeast Ohio school district violated state law when it failed to provide three formal observations before declining to renew an educator's contract, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled.

The court decided 6-1 that Shawn Jones should be reinstated because the Kent City School District's observation of the teacher's class when he was absent while recovering from a medical issue did not meet requirements set in the Revised Code.

Justice Pat Fischer dissented without a written opinion and would have dismissed the case as improvidently accepted.

It centered on the statutory protections the legislature has provided to educators employed under a limited contract – specifically, a requirement that districts conduct "at least three formal observations of each teacher who is under consideration for nonrenewal."

A first observation of Jones occurred in his classroom in January 2020, while a second took place virtually amid the coronavirus pandemic that May.

An evaluator was scheduled to conduct a third observation during an online class May 11, but Jones went to the hospital that morning with chest pains and was excused from work by a physician until June 1. The observer on May 15 attended an online session with Jones' students in which they discussed their progress on a project.

The Kent school board accepted the district superintendent's recommendation not to renew Jones' contract at a May 19 meeting, leading the educator to appeal.

Justice Jennifer Brunner wrote for the high court's majority that while the district reviewed the Jones' class three times, its course of action "does not satisfy the statutory requirement that the *teacher* in question be observed."

"We are mindful that because Jones was medically excused from work by his doctor from May 11 through June 1, it was not possible for the board to observe him and make a decision about his reemployment before the June 1 deadline set forth in (state law)," she wrote. "We also recognize the unique challenges and uncertainties that schools faced in spring 2020 as a result of the transition from in-person to remote learning occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. But we are bound to apply the unambiguous language of (state law)."

The high court's decision affirmed a ruling from the 11th District Court of Appeals overturning a decision by the Portage County Court of Common Pleas in favor of the school district.

The Supreme Court remanded the case to the common pleas court for further consideration, including a calculation of the back pay owed to Jones.

Judge Upholds Gender-Affirming Care Ban, Appeal Planned: A controversial law banning gender-affirming care for transgender youth can take effect, a Franklin County judge ruled Tuesday.

But the legal battle is not over as the group behind the lawsuit announced its plan to swiftly appeal the ruling.

Judge Michael Holbrook rejected several challenges to the law (HB 68) that the ACLU of Ohio filed on behalf of two transgender girls.

Among the claims raised in the lawsuit was that the law, which also includes language barring transgender girls from participating on women's sports teams, runs afoul of the single-subject rule.

Holbrook, though, found the law contains a common purpose.

"No matter how abhorrent that may be to some, it is a 'legitimate subject' for purposes of the Single Subject Rule under the laws of the State of Ohio at this time," he wrote. "The recourse for those who object is not within the Court but is instead with their vote."

The ACLU of Ohio also invoked an anti-Obamacare constitutional amendment approved by voters designed to ensure "health care freedoms."

Holbrook rejected that, along with an equal protection claim.

"The Court finds that upon weighing the evidence received at trial, the Health Care Ban is rationally related to this interest. It is limited to minors. Moreover, the medical care banned carries with it undeniable risk and permanent outcomes," he wrote.

"Indeed, countries once confident in the administration of gender affirming care to minors are now reversing their position as a result of the significant inconsistencies in results and potential side effects of the care. Thus, there can be no doubt that the Health Care Ban is neither arbitrary nor unreasonable."

The ACLU of Ohio also struck out on its allegation that the law violates due process.

In one of several statements issued in the wake of the decision, the group said it plans to appeal the ruling.

"This loss is not just devastating for our brave clients, but for the many transgender youth and their families across the state who require this critical, life-saving health care," Legal Director Freda Levenson said. "While this decision by the court is a genuine setback, it is not the end of the road in our fight to secure the constitutional rights of transgender youth, as well as all Ohioans' right to bodily autonomy. We are appealing immediately."

Senate Minority Leader Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) blasted the ruling and the law, saying it "represents a significant step backward for our state."

"This law disregards the professional guidance of medical experts and the lived experiences of transgender individuals and upends parental rights while endangering the health and well-being of our youth," she added. "As I've stated repeatedly, Ohioans have time and again told us that they don't want the government involved in their personal medical decisions. I believe this ruling is wrong on the merits, and it clearly defies the will of the majority of Ohioans."

House Minority Leader Allison Russo (D-Upper Arlington) also weighed in, calling the ruling "deeply concerning."

"This law's ban on gender-affirming care is not only unjust and medically unsound but also poses significant harm to Ohioans and the rights of parents to make medical decisions that are best for their own children in consultation with their doctors," she said.

The decision was applauded by others, including Attorney General Dave Yost's office.

"This case has always been about the legislature's authority to enact a law to protect our children from making irreversible medical and surgical decisions about their bodies," communications director Bethany McCorkle said. "The law doesn't say 'no' forever; it simply says 'not now' while the child is still growing."

John Fortney, a spokesman for Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima), described the decision as "correct."

"We protect children in Ohio," he said.

Center for Christian Virtue President Aaron Baer characterized the decision as one that will make Ohio safer for women and children.

"The ACLU's lawsuit has been exposed as absurd and nonsensical, and now our girls won't be forced to compete against boys in athletics, and children's hospitals can no longer perform dangerous and sterilizing procedures on kids," he said.

The Ohio Children's Hospital Association, in testimony against the law, previously denied that the state's children's hospitals perform any surgeries on minors for the condition of gender dysphoria, calling accusations to the contrary "deeply offensive and disappointing."

Holbrook previously put the law on hold, noting that the portion of the bill dealing with transgender care for youth failed to pass on its own accord.

Yost asked the Ohio Supreme Court to narrow the injunction to apply to just the two girls named in the lawsuit.

However, the justices declined to do so.

AG Predicts Transgender Case Will Reach High Court: Attorney General Dave Yost on Wednesday welcomed the ACLU of Ohio's planned appeal of a court ruling allowing the enforcement of a controversial law.

A day earlier, Franklin County Common Pleas Court Judge Michael Holbrook allowed the law banning gender-affirming care for transgender youth to take effect.

Shortly after the decision was issued, the ACLU of Ohio announced plans to swiftly appeal.

Speaking with reporters after kicking off his office's Fifth Annual Human Trafficking Summit (*see separate story*), Yost said he was "delighted" to learn the group would appeal the ruling.

"I was concerned that they were going to leave this at the trial court level, which would have no precedential value," he said. "Now we're going to get a review by the appellate court and the Supreme Court and I'm very optimistic that at the end of the day, Judge Holbrook's well-reasoned decision is going to be upheld and House Bill 68 will continue to be the law of the land."

Holbrook temporarily put the law on hold but issued his decision upholding it after a five-day trial that featured expert testimony from both sides.

"He clearly paid attention to what he heard from the experts and concluded that there is not a medical consensus here and the state was justified in passing this law," Yost said.

Google Case: Yost also addressed a recent federal court decision finding tech giant Google is a monopolist that has acted to maintain its monopoly in violation of the Sherman Act

"It doesn't mean a whole lot today because this is going to be appealed through the process," he said. "There'll be an appeals court decision and I have no doubt that Google will seek, or the plaintiffs will seek cert at the United States Supreme Court."

Yost also predicted that no matter the outcome of the case, the company will not be broken up.

"Why? Because Google doesn't work if it's not big," he said.

Yost said the company already operates differently in Europe than it does in America and believes the courts could force it change the way it operates in the states.

NCSL: Lawmakers Encouraged To Allow Schools To Experiment: Panelists told policymakers to eschew traditional, one-size-fits-all approaches to education amid societal shifts and advances in technology during a discussion at a legislative conference.

The National Conference of State Legislatures on Monday hosted a discussion on the future of education at its Legislative Summit in Louisville.

Ulcca Joshi Hansen, an author and education researcher, said policymakers need to shift their main focus away from academics as technology improves exponentially.

"It's not because academics and content don't matter, but they have to be the vehicles through which young people learn how to deal with ambiguity and to adapt," she said.

Hansen said currently she sees three types of schools – the first being the traditional "modern-day factory model" driven by core academics and standardized testing.

"They're doing social and emotional work, but they're not doing very rich work," she said. "It's more about managing young people than helping the young people develop the skills to manage themselves."

Hansen said most schools fall into a second category in which educators "bolt things on" to conventional education like social-emotional and project-based learning.

"The problem is conventional education doesn't reflect what we know about human development or learning, and so there's so much to fix that you either cycle through interventions and you don't get what you want, or you try to do so much at the same time that it buckles under its own weight," she said.

Hansen advocated policymakers explore a third system she calls "human-centered, liberatory" education that allows students to "go out into the world and see the world" to help them build connections with their communities and explore their interests.

She called on lawmakers to work on developing a "new infrastructure" that allows for development of accountability and assessment of schools undertaking the third approach.

"Carve out room in your states for research and development space where people who are already doing human-centered education ... can opt into it and then release them," she said. "The first part of policy is not new policies. It's release them from as many of the existing constraints as you can."

Hansen said new K-12 policy could be tailored around what works for the participating districts and could look different for different school typologies, such as rural and urban.

Vicki Phillips, CEO of the National Center on Education and the Economy, offered remarks on the group's forthcoming update to its "Blueprint for a High-Performing Education System."

She said policymakers first must facilitate high-quality early learning

"Successful countries bolster that by providing pathways to life after school that are meaningful, accessible and aligned to an evolving economy," she said.

Phillips said legislators also should invest in its teaching workforce, in part to ensure that they can keep up with the changing technological landscape.

"A future that's being rapidly reshaped by AI and other technologies demands significant shifts in teaching and learning, and it demands reimaging time, space and staffing," she said.

Phillips said as technology advances, policymakers must revisit not only what students are taught but how and when they learn.

"Those fundamental skills are now the floor," she said. "They are no longer the ceiling."

Phillips said it would take "courageous leadership" from lawmakers to bring community members together to help reshape education policy.

Hansen suggested lawmakers visit schools that are "doing work differently" already to help inform their statewide policy discussions.

Phillips said before engaging in major policy shifts, legislators should "engage the hearts and minds of many," including business and community leaders, as well as students.

"So many times we actually do to teachers or young people rather than have them at the table, as well," she said.

Hansen said the future of education may "blur the line" between K-12, higher education, health and human services and business, meaning many people need to be at the table as new policies are crafted.

NCSL: Tax Policy, Education Among Top Issues, Fiscal Analysts Say: LOUISVILLE, Ky. – Tax policy, K-12 education funding and housing are among this year's top issues noted by state fiscal analysts across the country.

Along with state economic conditions and long-term liabilities, those topics are top of mind for legislative fiscal offices, a senior policy analyst with the National Conference of State Legislatures said Tuesday. Eric Syverson said the list – which will be released in a forthcoming report – comes from a new database the organization is compiling.

In 2024, the top tax policy implemented by states was property tax relief, Syverson said. Other popular policies included income tax cuts, business incentives, tax benefits for families and sales tax exemptions:

- Fifteen states enacted property tax relief this year, Syverson said. Those cuts came primarily as homestead exemptions, either broad or targeted. For example, Kansas exempted the first \$75,000 of home value from a homeowner's property tax bill.
- Many states implemented new income taxes or accelerated previously enacted cuts. Syverson said there were fewer cuts this year than last year, but states are still cutting income taxes at a historically high pace.
- There has been increased interest by legislatures in using tax policy to help families with children, particularly to address the cost of child care. For example, Georgia, Kansas and Wisconsin made those types of tax benefits more generous this year. Syverson predicted more federal action on child tax credits in 2025.
- Six states enacted business-specific sales tax exemptions this year, and seven did so for certain goods and services.

A 'reality check' on some concerns

Michael D'Arcy, director of U.S. public finance for Fitch Ratings, gave attendees at the NCSL session a "reality check" on some of the top concerns identified by policymakers: declining revenues, economic uncertainty, demographic changes, structural deficits and state credit ratings.

The top concern, declining state revenue, is a very real issue, D'Arcy said. Revenue declined for 16 states in the last fiscal year, and year-over-year revenue growth across all states has decelerated.

Some of those declines are the result of economic conditions. But D'Arcy said it's a "largely engineered phenomenon" because of states' recently enacted tax cuts.

There are reasons for concern over the economy, but D'Arcy said Fitch is skeptical of some of the economic indicators that point to a coming recession. For example, he said recent increases in the

U.S. unemployment rate are a "statistical anomaly" because the numbers are driven by an increase in young, unskilled immigrant workers.

Fitch does not have any states on a negative outlook, and no state's credit rating is in an "immediate danger of going down," D'Arcy said.

As for structural deficits – where a government consistently spends more than it makes in revenue – Fitch's state credit team does not see reason for concern over the next few years. D'Arcy said the "economy would have to really hit a recession" for those deficits to become major problems.

'Unprecedented' teacher pay growth

Teacher compensation was the top K-12 education funding issue identified by state fiscal analysts.

There's been "unprecedented" increases in teacher salaries over the past few years, said Michelle Exstrom, director of the National Conference of State Legislatures' education program. The growth rate of teacher compensation has caught up with the private sector for the first time in years.

In 2023 and 2024, lawmakers across the country introduced 191 bills addressing special student populations – such as special education, English-language learners and at-risk students – the most of any education topic.

Part of that figure includes a new trend, Exstrom said: funding specifically to help homeless students, a group that graduates at significantly lower rates.

The biggest outstanding at-risk funding issue? Exstrom said states are still trying to figure out how to ensure the money actually goes to those particular student groups after it is sent to school districts.

Other major school funding issues in 2024 include reducing schools' reliance on property tax revenue, reforms to school funding formulas and big efforts to rethink schooling, including through avenues such as voucher programs and community schools.

Other issues: Long-term liabilities, housing

State and local governments reported \$3 trillion in long-term debt as of 2021, according to Fatima Yousofi, a principal associate for Pew Charitable Trusts. The good news, she said, is that states have made progress in recent years, particularly in funding their pension liabilities.

Additionally, deferred costs of infrastructure maintenance are estimated to be in the range of \$1 trillion to \$2 trillion.

Yousofi said climate change will add to that bill through various avenues, including road and bridge repair and updates to states' water systems.

Heather Wilson, a senior policy specialist for the National Conference of State Legislatures, said the four primary ways states are addressing the nation's housing shortage are through pursuing stability,

easing zoning restrictions, enacting development incentives and endeavoring to increase home ownership.

State lawmakers have introduced 1,913 housing-related bills so far this year, Wilson said, and 336 have passed.

She cited the Joint Center for Housing Studies' 2024 report, which showed the nation is 1.5 million units short of meeting its housing needs and no state has a sufficient supply of affordable rental housing.

SCOTUS Cases On Transgender Care, Pornography Could Impact Ohio: At least two cases before the nation's highest court in its next term could have major implications for Ohio.

One case, *United States v. Skrmetti*, involves a Tennessee law that bans gender-affirming care for minors.

Three transgender youths, joined by the Biden Administration, challenged the law on equal protection grounds because it includes a carveout for hormone therapy for certain minors, including those with precocious puberty.

A federal district court blocked enforcement but the injunction was lifted by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Amy Howe, who runs SCOTUSblog, told attendees at the National Conference of State Legislatures' annual conference that oral arguments in that case are likely set for December.

A similar law in Ohio is going through its own legal battle. A Franklin County judge this week allowed the law (HB 68) to go into effect but the ACLU of Ohio on Thursday appealed that ruling.

Attorney General Dave Yost predicted that case will eventually reach the Ohio Supreme Court.

The other case that could have ramification for Ohio is *Free Speech Coalition, Inc. v. Paxton*.

That case involves a Texas law requiring any website that publishes adult content to verify the age of each of its users before providing access.

A similar legislative effort is underway in Ohio.

A bipartisan bill (SB 212) in the Senate to that effect has received three hearings.

Howe explained that the question the justices will seek to resolve is whether the court of appeals erred in applying rational-basis review, instead of strict scrutiny, to a law burdening adults' access to protected speech.

While its schedule is not yet full, Howe predicted the nation's highest court will not have as impactful of a term as it did when issuing several landmark decisions earlier this year.

"So far, the next term does not have the kind of blockbuster cases on the schedule that the last term did," she said.

Howe also discussed several of those decisions from the last term, including one that wiped away the *Chevron* doctrine, which directed courts to deferred to agency interpretations of ambiguous statutory language.

Asked how lawmakers should handle drafting legislation in the wake of the ruling, Howe advised legislators to be as clear as possible.

"Say what you mean and mean what you say," she said.

News July 26 – August 2

Plethora Of K-12 Policy Changes Get Governor's Signature: Students and parents are not the only Ohioans getting into the back-to-school spirit.

Gov. Mike DeWine on Friday inked legislation barring schools from requiring teachers or students to ascribe to specific beliefs (HB 214) to cap off a flurry of bill signings that included several measures focused on K-12 education.

HB214 had been opposed by Democratic lawmakers, who contend it is redundant due to existing protections for speech and expression in the U.S. and Ohio constitutions and because of the state's licensure code of professional conduct for educators.

Sponsor Rep. Adam Holmes (R-Nashport), meanwhile, argued the proposal is needed to ensure the state's schools remain "forums for open expression, new ideas and diverse opinions and experiences."

The bill was one of several that grew with the incorporation of other legislation before it was sent to the governor ahead of the General Assembly's summer recess. In HB214's case, that meant the addition of Senate-passed legislation requiring school districts to adopt a religious expression day policy (SB 49).

Among the more expansive pieces of legislation signed by the governor this week was a plan initially focused on giving public schools more staffing flexibility amid personnel shortages in some districts (SB 168).

Notable changes made in the House and agreed to by the Senate included removal of language eliminating seniority as a preference when districts make staffing reductions – a sore spot for unions – and the addition of a provision generally barring state evaluations of charter school sponsors for the coming school year.

Other notable provisions in the measure, which becomes effective Oct. 21, will:

- ☐ Permit school districts to use their own framework for teacher evaluations.

- Require the State Board of Education to issue an alternative resident educator license to an individual who holds a master's degree and passes an exam in the subject matter they intend to teach.
- Clarify that expanded Rapback criminal records check requirements affecting unlicensed school and district employees only apply to workers who may routinely interact with children.
- Direct the Department of Education & Workforce to establish a pilot program for the coming school year to evaluate the feasibility of remotely administered state assessments.
- Mandate that DEW create a five-year School Turnaround Pilot Program focused on low-performing school districts and community schools.
- Increase the competitive bidding threshold to \$75,000 for school districts for the current year, with 3% annual increases to follow.

The governor also signed a measure (SB 94) initially focused on laws governing county recorders that grew to include multiple pieces of K-12 and higher education-related legislation.

Included in the bill was separate legislation aimed at addressing antisemitism on college campuses (HB 606), improving higher education cost transparency (HB 27) and surveying educator-preparation programs on how they train teachers on issues related to student behavior (HB 572).

Also set to become effective in the fall is a revised plan initially focused on establishing reporting requirements for retiring K-12 license holders accused of misconduct (HB 147). It was expanded to incorporate a handful of other education bills ahead of summer recess.

The late additions to the measure will: bar schools from establishing different prices for attending school events based on payment method (SB 181); allow a student who has been the victim of abuse or various criminal acts to transfer athletic eligibility to another school (SB 259); and permit the use of virtual services for recipients of the state's Autism and Jon Peterson Special Needs scholarship – a modified version of a previously introduced House bill (HB 440).

Two additional measures that garnered the governor's signature are focused on school and student security and safety.

One will set standards for student data privacy (SB 29). The measure was finalized after the House added language allowing schools or districts to monitor a student device to prevent any threat to life or safety, instead of an "imminent" threat under a prior version.

The second – a plan introduced by now-U.S. Rep. Michael Rulli (R-Salem) – will require annual inspection of protective door assemblies in school buildings (SB 112).

K-12 Administrators Urge High Court To Reverse Ruling: Ohio school boards will have too much leeway to terminate administrators without intervention from the Ohio Supreme Court, according to two statewide groups.

The Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators and Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators have filed amicus briefs urging the high court to find an eastern Ohio school improperly reduced its administrative staff.

The case centers on a statute allowing districts to suspend administrators' contracts for reasons unrelated to job performance, such as worsening finances.

The Switzerland of Ohio Local School District's board used that law to terminate its associate superintendent, director of business operations, adult education director, nutrition and food service supervisor and systems analyst during a 2021 meeting at the recommendation of the district's superintendent.

Four of the affected administrators – Cyndi Brill, Suzanne Holland, Linda O'Connor, and James Ruble – filed suit claiming in part they were improperly suspended because the district's local policy based on the law gave too much discretion to its superintendent.

Ohio's 7th District Court of Appeals disagreed, issuing a per curiam decision stating that the local policy justifiably uses the "best interest of the district" as the primary factor for considering contract suspensions.

"This comports with the purpose of the statute, which is to allow school boards the flexibility to adjust their administrative staff according to the school district's needs," the ruling states.

The plaintiffs appealed to the high court, arguing the local policy violated statute because it did not include a required procedure to determine the order of suspension of contracts and fails to fully account for the right of restoration established in the law.

"In effect, the court allowed the Board to adopt a policy that avoided identifying any procedure whatsoever for determining the order of suspension of contracts, and which fully abrogated the suspended administrators' right of restoration to positions for which they were qualified," their merit brief states.

OAESA argues in its amicus brief that the appellate court decision gives districts "carte blanche with respect to the suspension of administrator contracts."

"The OAESA's concern and interest is, among other things, that the opinion of the court of appeals may be cited as authority, whether it is dicta or not, that the statutes protecting administrators will be erroneously construed liberally in favor of boards of education and strictly against administrators and that other boards of education will feel empowered to adopt their versions of R.C. 3319.171, stripping away the protections that the General Assembly has afforded to administrators," its filing states.

OASSA called on the high court to enforce what it called the "plain and unambiguous" language in the statute in question or risk essentially making administrators "at-will" employees – a result it claims the General Assembly never intended.

"Eliminating job protections for school administrators disincentivizes individuals from applying for administrative positions for fear that boards of education have almost unfettered authority to suspend administrative contracts mid-contract," its brief states. "Interpersonal conflicts with administrators will result in more contract suspensions. Ambiguity and uncertainty regarding what job protections actually exist in law will deter seasoned, qualified potential candidates from applying to administrative positions."

School Safety Center Takes Holistic Approach, DeWine Says: As schools prepare to reopen their doors for the new year, Gov. Mike DeWine is encouraging school staff, mental health

professionals and first responders to consider not just violence in their safety plans, but also mental health, AEDs, vaping and bullying.

"The focus many times, and understandably, is the threat of an active shooter and we know that's a real threat," he said Wednesday while opening the Ohio School Safety Summit in Columbus.

"We know you plan to deal with that, but we also know there are other things that parents worry about: severe weather, bullying, vaping," he continued. "We worry about substance use, human trafficking and many other things, so we are trying to take a holistic approach of what the (Ohio School Safety Center) is doing and how they try to help you."

In the five years since DeWine created the OSCC to serve as a centralized location for school safety support, it has grown to a staff of over 50, trained over 7,000 individuals and hosted four annual safety summits.

Trainings, both in-person and online, have focused on keeping students safe during after school activities, sexual assault, violence prevention, conflict de-escalation, suicide prevention and bystander intervention with CPR and automated external defibrillators, he said.

DeWine noted he recently signed legislation requiring schools to place AEDs in their recreational facilities (HB 47).

He said he signed the bill at Worthington Kilbourne High School to encourage other public places to purchase AEDs that are "not horribly expensive" and do not require training to use.

The governor also touted the success of the Ohio School Tip Line, a 24/7 anonymous reporting system that underwent a major upgrade this past year.

"We see more and more schools that are using it," he said. "In addition to texting and calling or emailing the tip line, tipsters can now submit tips to the Safer Ohio School Tip Line app and through a webform. That idea came from students who said they were more comfortable doing that."

Schools can track old tips through a case management system, and all tips are taken by crisis response professionals in 10 different languages.

DeWine told reporters that one of his top safety concerns remains the rate at which Ohio youth are vaping, which is double the national average.

"While young people are not smoking nearly as much, what is dramatically up is the vaping, and so that means we are addicting a new generation," he said.

DeWine has repeatedly, and unsuccessfully, called on lawmakers to enact a uniform statewide ban on flavored vapes and flavored cigarettes.

DeWine said students at the summit told him that vaping is a "huge, huge problem."

"We need to target this and do something," he said. "We have the power in Ohio to do it, and we need to do it and the legislature needs to pass it."

The governor's office is currently looking at opportunities for additional investment in school safety for the upcoming operating budget, he said, and is consulting with the school safety team.

"One thing I told people here is we want to hear from you," he said. "If you have ideas about what we can be doing to help you besides what we're already doing let us know."

Yost Rejects Property Tax Amendment Summary: Backers of a proposed constitutional amendment regarding the homestead exemption and personal property taxes did not gather enough voter signatures to start the process, Attorney General Dave Yost announced Wednesday.

The amendment aimed to alleviate the "burden of ever-increasing taxes on...private property, especially to prevent the loss of home and property of disabled veterans, the elderly, and the average citizen due to this continual increase," according to the petition.

Its aim is also "to encourage the development of more permanent neighborhoods by potentially reducing transience caused by inability to retain private property due to escalating taxes. By limiting the power of the state to increase the taxable property value of private property."

Yost's office reported that it received the petition on July 23, but the minimum requirement of 1,000 signatures could not be verified.

In a letter to Gerald Bruce of Groveport, a petition committee member, Yost wrote that under Revised Code, part-petitions should only contain signatures of electors from one county, but the submission contained signatures from multiple counties.

Following the code, the petitions were submitted to the county boards of election from which the majority of signatures were obtained, he said.

"The Attorney General's Office has received reports from those boards. The submission, in total, contained only 508 valid signatures," Yost wrote. "Because your submission did not contain the verified signatures of at least one thousand qualified electors, we must reject it."

His office has not made any determination concerning the summary language and the rejection is based solely on the failure to obtain at least 1,000 signatures, he concluded.

Portions of this report taken from Gongwer News Service gongwer@gongwer-oh.com, the Columbus Dispatch, Cleveland.com, the Statehouse News Bureau, Hannah News Service, News5 Cleveland, the New York Times, the Journal-News and the Fordham Institute.