

BRIEF CASE

THE OHIO SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

Serving the public school leadership team



School districts, communities honoring board members this month

January is School Board Recognition Month in Ohio, and OSBA and school districts and communities across the state are devoting the month to giving board members a well-deserved “thanks.” To help districts celebrate, OSBA has created a resource kit with ideas for honoring board members at www.ohioschoolboards.org/sbrm. After your celebrations, submit photos and articles about your activities at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/84140> or send them to **Angela Penquite** at apenquite@ohioschoolboards.org or 8050 N. High St., Suite 100, Columbus, OH 43235. The submission deadline is Feb. 9. OSBA will feature your recognition activities in the Journal magazine and on its website.

Northwest Ohio board member takes office as 2023 OSBA president

Christine Varwig, Toledo City, became OSBA president on Jan. 1. Since her election to the Toledo City board in 2014, Varwig has served the association in numerous leadership roles and is a member of OSBA’s Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, Legislative Platform Committee, Student Achievement Leadership Team and many other committees. A tireless advocate for public education, Varwig hopes to use her platform as president to encourage districts to tell their stories as well as promote the training and resources OSBA has to offer.

U.S. Department of Energy offers grants for school building improvements

The U.S. Department of Energy has launched the Renew America’s Schools grant, which can provide up to \$80 million to help K-12 public schools make clean energy updates. Districts with the highest need will be prioritized. The fund also includes the Energy Champions Leading the Advancement of Sustainable Schools Prize (Energy CLASS Prize) program, which will award \$100,000 to 25 local education agencies to “train select administration and facilities personnel as energy managers.” Concept papers are due Jan. 26, with full applications due April 21. Details can be found at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/energy>.

Lower percentage of schools using USDA meal programs, study finds

Participation in school meal programs offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has declined significantly over the course of this year, particularly since the discontinuation of universal school meal waivers, according to data released by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Staffing shortages, supply chain issues that led to increased program costs and unwillingness on the part of qualifying parents to apply for free or reduced-price meals were among the barriers to

Jan. 9, 2022

Volume 55 Issue 1

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Route workshop information to:

- Administrators
- Principals
- Communication specialists
- Transportation supervisors

participation cited by districts. As of October, participation stood at 88%, while typical numbers hover around 95%. USDA's Economic Research Service reported last year that child food insecurity had declined significantly under the universal waiver policy, and NCES is investigating whether the discontinuation of the policy has contributed to the decline in students who get lunch at school.

Governor appoints new member to State Board of Education

James Mermis of Upper Arlington has been appointed to the State Board of Education effective Jan. 1. A managing partner of the Junto Company, a government relations and business development firm, Mermis is no stranger to state posts: He also worked in the Voinovich

and Taft administrations. His position was formerly occupied by Mike Toal.

COSSBA conference discount deadline is Jan. 28

The Consortium of State School Boards Associations' (COSSBA) National Conference early

registration discount deadline is Jan. 28. The inaugural event is set for March 30-April 2 in Tampa. For more information, visit <https://www.cossba.org/cossba-inaugural-conference-home>.

OSBA NE region seeking awards nominations

The OSBA Northwest Region seeks nominations from districts for the community service and leadership awards and the Neil Pohlmann Award of Excellence in Education. Nomination forms are posted at www.ohioschoolboards.org/nw-region. The deadline for the Neil Pohlmann Award is Jan. 30. The other applications are due Jan. 31.

OSBA online

● www.ohioschoolboards.org
Have questions about recent updates to school law? OSBA's Legal Ledger blog can help: <https://www.ohioschoolboards.org/blogs/legal-ledger>.

Partnership with Toyota transitioning students to work

Jefferson County Vocational School hopes to create the next generation of auto technicians through a program with Toyota Motor Corp.

Program Director **Ron Reasoner** told a local TV station that students earn industry certification, "and it gives them a big advantage in looking for employment at a Toyota dealership." Most of the training is online, so students can service many vehicles with a click of a button. Toyota also has donated engines.

"The only way we can grow our business is to be able to support the local schools to grow these kids into the program, to give them a career that they can retire from," said **Ryan Westling** with TEAM Automotive in Steubenville.

Source: WTOV-TV



Briefcase

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OSBA leads the way to educational excellence by serving Ohio's public school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions.



BULLETIN BOARD

compiled by Melanie Price, senior administrative assistant of communication services

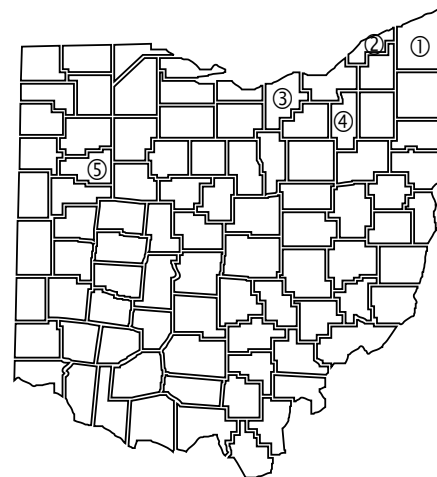
OSBA executive searches

Superintendent

District	Deadline	Contact
① Ashtabula Area City	Jan. 11	OSBA Search Services, (614) 540-4000
② Riverside Local (Lake)	Feb. 10	OSBA Search Services, (614) 540-4000
③ Avon Lake City	Feb. 20	OSBA Search Services, (614) 540-4000

Treasurer

District	Deadline	Contact
④ Akron City	Jan. 20	OSBA Search Services, (614) 540-4000
⑤ Lima City	Feb. 1	OSBA Search Services, (614) 540-4000



Other Ohio searches

Position	Location	Deadline	Contact
Superintendent	Hardin Northern Local (Hardin)	Jan. 20	Scott Howell, superintendent, Midwest Regional ESC, (937) 498-1354, ext. 5500
Superintendent	Holgate Local (Henry)	Jan. 30	Kerri Weir, superintendent, Northwest Ohio ESC, (567) 444-4795

Board changes

Elmwood Local (Wood) appointed Kristy Silverwood to the board effective Dec. 6. She replaced Brian King, who resigned. ●● Vinton County Local (Vinton) appointed Misty Napier to the board effective immediately. She replaced Laura Martin, who resigned in November.

Administrative changes

Superintendents

Kenston Local (Geauga) hired Interim Superintendent Steven Sayers as superintendent effective immediately. ●●● St. Henry Consolidated Local (Mercer) Superintendent Julie Garke announced her retirement effective July 30.

Treasurers

Ohio Hi-Point Career Center hired Assistant Treasurer Caleb Lang as treasurer effective Jan. 1. He replaced Eric Adelsberger, who retired Dec. 31. ●●● Hillsdale Local (Ashland) hired Lesa S. Deter as treasurer effective immediately. She replaced Rick Blahnik, who is retiring. Deter was previously treasurer at Lucas Local (Richland).

Editor's note

Job postings must be received six weeks before the application deadline to ensure timely publication.
Thank you for your cooperation.

Sympathies

Former Berkshire Local (Geauga) Board of Education member **Allen I. "Al" Tolchinsky** died Dec. 12. He was 75. ●●●
Former Poland Local (Mahoning) Board of Education member **Laura A. Stacy** died Dec. 10. She was 83.



COMMUNICATIONS

by Erin Good, communications consultant

Keep families engaged with an easy-to-use website

Families are more engaged now than before the pandemic due to the switch to virtual instruction. Digital communications and the wider availability of Wi-Fi and devices have made parent-school communication easier.

More than three-quarters of educators said that parent-school communication increased during the pandemic. And more than a third — 37% — said it increased a lot, according to a survey by the EdWeek Research Center.

Facebook Live videos, daily website updates and email blasts were crucial to getting COVID-19-related information to families quickly. Your school community has come to rely on your digital communications, and especially your website, to keep up with COVID-19-related information and general school updates. Your website might have barely been accessed pre-pandemic, but now it's a well-used hub of important information.

Now that schools are approaching the midyear mark

of an in-person year, take some time to refresh your website and ensure all families can easily access information. Follow these recommendations to optimize your website.

Navigation

Your homepage should be simple and guide users to where they want to go fast. Include quick links, rotating images, social media links, news and events. Highlight upcoming events with a link to view the entire calendar and use images to draw attention to important events.

Internal links

Having internal links connecting your pages so content is easy to find and consume is a best practice. If you have a page that is not being linked to any other page, consider adding some links or removing it. If you publish a blog or newsletter, it should include links to other relevant pages on the school's website. This will help improve

both your search engine optimization and the user experience, because users will be able to find relevant content faster.

Responsive design

Many families access your website solely on smartphones. According to the Pew Research Center, reliance on smartphones for online access is especially common among younger adults, lower-income Americans and those with a high school education or less. Learn more at www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile.

Google offers a mobile-friendly testing tool (<https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>) that can be used on a page-by-page basis to help determine which sections of your website are fully optimized and which could use some improvements.

Website accessibility requirements

The pandemic revealed

Continued on page 5



OSBA 2023
**COFFEE
- CHAT -**

Electric Market Update in 2023

JAN. 17 | 8:30 - 9 A.M.

**Presented by: Power4Schools,
The Ohio Schools Council and Palmer Energy**

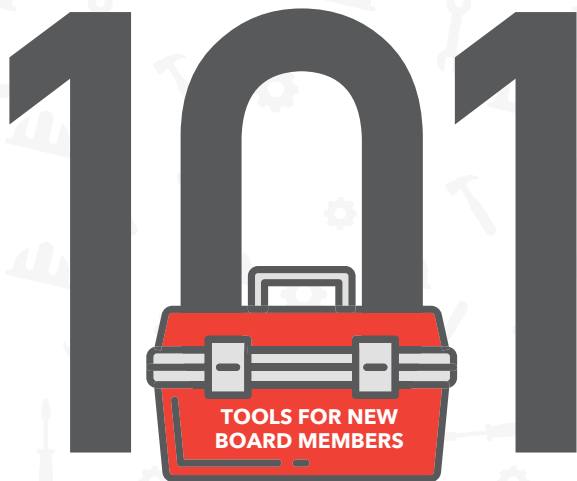
Speaker: Mark R. Frye, president, Palmer Energy

This session will assist treasurers and superintendents in:

- Navigating current electric markets.
- Forecasting where electric markets are headed.
- Identifying ways your district can save money by minimizing costs.

For more information and to register: www.ohioschoolboards.org/events

BOARD MEMBER



Recently appointed to your school board? Register for this upcoming workshop!

BOARD MEMBER 101

Date: Jan. 21, 2023

Location: Columbus

New board members can get the tools needed to excel in their first year on the board during this one-day workshop. OSBA staff will cover a variety of topics, including board governance, policy, legislative advocacy and current legal issues.

Discover the resources OSBA has to help you in your first year and beyond.

For more information and to register: www.ohioschoolboards.org/workshops



Join us as we discuss the current issues in public education.

Date Jan. 24, 2023	Time 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Cost Free
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Save the date for this upcoming virtual event. OSBA Forums will tackle the critical issues facing public education today. We will discuss and provide insights and strategies to assist you in today's challenging environment.



Register at: www.ohioschoolboards.org/events



Master of Transportation Administration Program

OSBA offers this training curriculum to support administrators who are responsible for student transportation. This program meets and exceeds the requirement in the administrative code for annual transportation in-service training.

These half-day workshops — offered from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. — include a working lunch and time for questions. Each class is \$105, or you can purchase an MTA subscription for \$700 to attend all six sessions in the series. Contact **Doug Palmer**, OSBA senior transportation consultant, for subscription information. All workshops will be offered virtually and in-person at the OSBA office, 8050 N. High St., Columbus, 43235.

Next workshop: Jan. 25, 2023

Driver records, background checks and compliance needs

Ohio's regulations governing school bus driver requirements are among the most detailed in the nation. This seminar will present methods to maintain compliance. Driver audit forms, onboarding checklists and task calendars will be provided and reviewed.



**OHIO SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION**

View class details and register:
www.ohioschoolboards.org/master-transportation-administration



SERVING SCHOOL BOARDS

The Ohio School Boards Association is dedicated to serving the needs of school board members and the districts they serve.

The association's products and services help prepare members for their duties, overcome tough challenges and find the way to successful board governance.

OSBA is composed of more than 700 school boards. Nearly 3,500 elected and appointed members represent Ohio's local, city, exempted village, career center and educational service center districts. The management teams and district staff of member boards also have access to all OSBA services.

Member services include:

Statewide and local training opportunities: Develop your board governance and leadership skills and earn recognition for your achievements through our variety of workshops.

Legislative advocacy at the state and federal levels: OSBA actively represents the interests of school board members on critical issues such as school-funding reform. OSBA also monitors state and federal agencies to assess regulations affecting schools.

Consulting services: Our experienced staff provide both dues- and fee-based services in board-superintendent relations, board-treasurer relations, board effectiveness and governance, executive searches, transportation, safety, policy services, school law, state and federal legislation, communications, human resources and more.

Comprehensive information resources: With in-depth publications, websites and online subscriptions, OSBA is your best source of information on education issues.



**Ohio School
Boards Association**

8050 N. High Street, Suite 100 • Columbus, Ohio 43235

(614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA • www.ohioschoolboards.org



WORKSHOP REGISTRATION

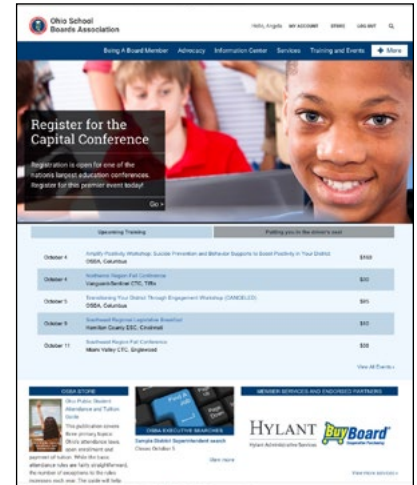
Register at www.ohioschoolboards.org/workshops

OSBA members can access member-only information, including workshop registration, by logging in to the OSBA website.

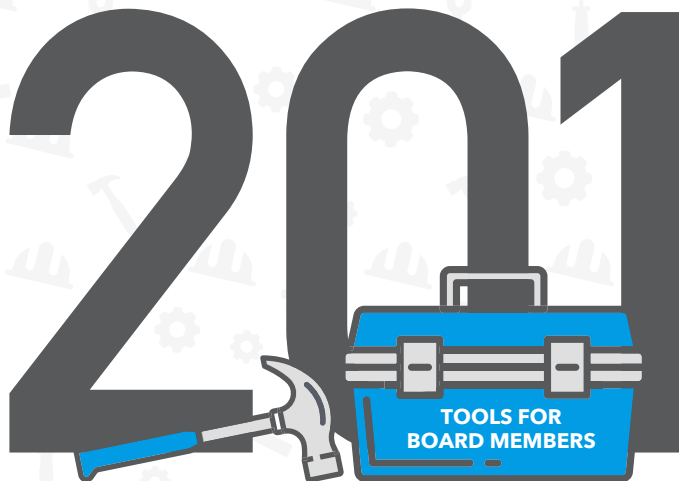
How to log in

Click on “Log in to your account” on the top right of the website. Log in using your email address on file and your password. Click “Reset your password” if needed.

If it says “We could not find your email address,” or if this is your first time logging in to the site, click “Create new account.” At the username prompt, enter your email address, select your affiliation and school district, and click “Submit.” Create a password and add your job title on the next screen. An email with a link to activate your account will be sent to you. Click on the link to activate your account, and you will be directed to a home screen.



BOARD MEMBER



BOARD MEMBER 201

Southwest Region

Feb. 4 Hilton Garden Inn Mason

Northeast Region

Feb. 4 Holiday Inn Cleveland South

Northwest Region

Feb. 11 Hilton Garden Inn Perrysburg

Central Region

Feb. 11 OSBA in Columbus

Content for this workshop includes challenges for board members, developments in legislation and policy, and strategies to build or maintain strong partnerships with fellow board members and administrators. Legal, legislative and policy experts will answer your questions and provide the tools and knowledge you need to advance achievement in your district.

For more information and to register: www.ohioschoolboards.org/workshops

Communications, continued from page 4

the importance of website accessibility. Remote learning and Zoom meetings made it easier for some people with disabilities to engage and participate in school activities, and people should be able to count on the same easy access to content on your website. Website accessibility standards include requirements for alternative text on photos, subtitles and transcripts with videos and a design with required structural and navigational elements.

A quick way to check your website's accessibility is to use the WAVE web accessibility evaluation tool. You simply enter a web address for a report or use a WAVE browser extension to test

accessibility directly within your web browser. Learn more at <https://wave.webaim.org>.

Consider involving your community in checking your website's accessibility. Ask students or families with sight, hearing and cognition disabilities to evaluate your website. Use their feedback to make necessary changes and ensure your website and other digital content are easy for everyone to use.

School website example

Dayton City recently won an award of excellence from National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA). Its website, www.dps.k12.oh.us, is visually appealing, easy to navigate and

updated regularly. The website includes these useful features:

- a pop-up window with links to the latest news, calendar and bell schedule, COVID-19 metrics and crisis-line contact information;
- urgent news in a scrolling banner below navigation;
- a slider of the most frequently requested features;
- a "Popular" section with links for student enrollment, the employee log-in, school board meeting information, a staff directory and more.

For more ideas, view all of NSPRA's digital media award winners at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/72763>.

Source: Washington State School Directors' Association



LEGISLATIVE REPORT

by Jennifer Hogue, director of legislative services

Eventful opening day starts the 135th General Assembly

Opening day for the Ohio General Assembly is usually a day filled with pomp and circumstance. Legislators take the oath of office, and leadership elections are held. These opening ceremonies are typically uneventful and play out as expected with little surprise, but this year was different.

In November, House

Republicans announced that Rep. **Derek Merrin** (R-Monclova Township) had been selected unanimously by House Republicans as speaker-elect for the 135th General Assembly. When the Ohio House convened on Jan. 3, the outcome was quite different. Rep. **Jason Stephens** (R-Kitts Hill) and Merrin both received nominations to serve as

speaker of the House. When votes were tallied, Stephens was victorious, having received 54 votes, including all 32 Democratic members of the House, to Merrin's 43 votes.

Stephens is serving his second full term in the Ohio House and serves the 93rd House district, which includes all of Gallia,

Continued on page 6

Jackson and Lawrence counties. He has previously served as the chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and has served on the Finance, Insurance and Public Utilities committees as well.

After his election, Stephens said in his acceptance speech, "I pledge to respect and work with each and every one of us to address the many concerns of our state. I pledge to always have an open door; I pledge to listen, and I encourage all to do the same."

Stephens later told reporters, "I am really looking forward to working with Rep. Merrin and those who may not have voted for me. I think it is important for the House to be able to come together on issues we do agree on and that's what I hope to be able to do. I think it is important for the speaker to provide the platform and provide the structure so that the members' ideas can come to fruition."

The House also selected Rep. **Scott Oelslager** (R-North Canton) as the speaker pro tempore by a vote of 83-14. Merrin and 13 of his supporters chose not to support Oelslager's election. Other members of the House Republican leadership team are expected to be elected at a later date.

Rep. **Allison Russo** (D-Upper Arlington) was reelected as House minority leader. When asked by reporters about the House Democrats support of House

Speaker Stephens, Russo stated, "We are the most consolidated bloc of votes here, and we had an opportunity to exercise our power here. There was clearly division on the other side, they needed our votes. We took the opportunity to make sure that we were going to be working with the speaker we felt like, at the end of the day, would work with us on the issues."

Rounding out the House Democratic leadership team are Rep. **Dontavius Jarrells** (D-Columbus) as assistant minority leader, Rep. **Jessica Miranda** (D-Forest Park) as minority whip and Rep. **Tavia Galonski** (D-Akron) as assistant minority whip.

Opening day in the Ohio Senate was much less eventful, with the previously announced leadership slates being elected. Sen. **Matt Huffman** (R-Lima) was reelected as Senate president. Joining him on the Senate Republican leadership team are Sen. **Kirk Schuring** (R-Canton) as president pro tempore, Sen. **Rob McColley** (R-Napoleon) as majority floor leader and **Theresa Gavarone** (R-Bowling Green) as majority whip.

Senate Democrats will be led by Minority Leader **Nickie Antonio** (D-Lakewood). Rounding out the Senate Democratic leadership team will be Sen. **Hearcel Craig** (D-Columbus) as assistant minority leader, Sen. **Kent Smith** (D-Euclid) as minority whip and Sen. **Paula Hicks-Hudson** as

assistant minority whip.

The next step, now that members have been sworn in and leadership slates have been elected, is the announcement of committee assignments. Senate President Huffman recently announced the Senate's committee assignments. Committee assignments in the House will take some extra time given the recent leadership shake-up.

Below are the three Senate committees that traditionally consider the bulk of the education related bills.

Senate Education Committee

- Sen. **Andrew Brenner** (R-Delaware), chair
- Sen. **Sandra O'Brien** (R-Rome), vice chair
- Sen. **Catherine Ingram** (D-Cincinnati), ranking minority member
- Sen. **Bill Blessing** (R-Colerain Township)
- Sen. **Steve Huffman** (R-Tipp City)
- Sen. **Michele Reynolds** (R-Canal Winchester)
- Sen. **Vernon Sykes** (D-Akron)

Senate Finance Committee

- Sen. **Matt Dolan** (R-Chagrin Falls), chair
- Sen. **Jerry Cirino** (R-Kirtland), vice chair
- Sen. Sykes, ranking minority member

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PUBLIC SCHOOLS WORK!

compiled by Scott Gerfen, assistant editor

Bluffton students sell cookies to help classmates pay lunch bills

The idea was simple and certainly not unique. However, what 10 girls at **Bluffton EV's** Bluffton Middle School accomplished had their community's attention during the holiday season.

Spreading the word through Facebook and word of mouth, the girls took orders for cookies. They bought premade, shaped cookies that just needed to be put in the oven, frosted, sprinkled and decorated for the

season. The cookies were then sold for \$10 a dozen or \$5 for a half dozen.

The money raised allowed over 110 students in both the elementary and middle schools to pay off their lunch charges. The bill was \$899.97. The girls cut a check for \$900.

"In a world today that often pegs this generation as lazy, unmotivated, and not always in a positive light, this is a prime example that there is so much

good left in the world and that stories like these can provide hope that in the Christmas season hope can prevail," Bluffton Middle School Principal **Josh Kauffman** said.

In a letter addressed to the district, the girls said, "We hope this will spread cheer and benefit some of the students in need. 'Happiness doesn't result from what we get, but from what we give.'"

Source: www.limaohio.com

Legislative Report, continued from page 6

- Sen. Blessing
- Sen. Brenner
- Sen. Craig
- Sen. Gavarone
- Sen. Hicks-Hudson
- Sen. **George Lang**
(R-West Chester Township)
- Sen. **Nathan Manning**
(R-North Ridgeville)
- Sen. **Bill Reineke**
(R-Tiffin)
- Sen. **Mark Romanchuk**
(R-Ontario)
- Sen. Schuring

Senate Ways and Means Committee

- Sen. Blessing, chair

- Sen. Kristina Roegner
(R-Hudson), vice chair
- Sen. Smith, ranking
minority member
- Sen. Cirino
- Sen. **Tim Schaffer**
(R-Lancaster)

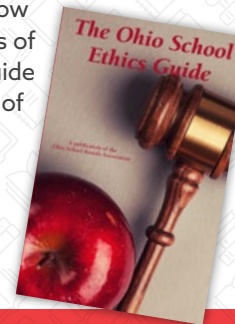
Bills will begin to be introduced in the coming days, but the first big item of business is expected to be the next biennial budget. Gov. **Mike DeWine** is expected to unveil his budget requests in early February.

Editor's note: The information in this article was current as of Jan. 5, 2023.

THE OHIO SCHOOL ETHICS GUIDE

A comprehensive discussion of all Ohio laws that define the ethical conduct of school board members and administrators. The book includes financial disclosure filing requirements, how to avoid conflicts of interest and a guide to compatibility of public offices.

Cost: \$15



Purchase this and other publications at:
www.ohioschoolboards.org/catalog

January 2023

- 15 *Deadline for boards of education of city, exempted village and local school districts to meet and organize — RC 3313.14; last day for boards of education of city, exempted village, vocational and local school districts to adopt tax budgets for the coming school fiscal year — RC 5705.28(A)(1).*
- 17 Coffee Chat: Electric Market Update in 2023 Virtual
- 20 *Last day for boards of education to submit fiscal tax-year budget to county auditor — RC 5705.30.*
- 21 Board Member 101 Columbus
- 23 *Last day to submit certification for income tax levy to Ohio Department of Taxation for May election — RC 5748.02(A) (100 days prior to election).*
- 24 OSBA Forum Virtual
- 25 OSBA Master of Transportation Administration: Driver records/ background check/ compliance needs Columbus and virtual
- 27 *Last day to submit emergency, current operating expenses or conversion levy to county auditor for May election — RC 5705.194, 5705.195, 5705.213, 5705.219(C) (95 days prior to election).*
- 31 *Deadline for joint vocational school districts and educational service center (ESC) governing boards to meet and organize —*

RC 3313.14; deadline for secondary schools to provide information about College Credit Plus to all students enrolled in grades six through 11 — RC 3365.04(A); annual campaign finance reports must be filed by certain candidates (by 4 p.m.) detailing contributions and expenditures from the last day reflected in the previous report through Dec. 31, 2022 — RC 3517.10(A)(3).

February 2023

- 1 *Last day for school district to file resolution of necessity, resolution to proceed and auditor’s certification for bond levy with board of elections for May election — RC 133.18(D); last day for county auditor to certify school district bond levy terms for May election — RC 133.18(C); last day to submit continuing replacement, permanent improvement or operating levy for May election to board of elections — RC 5705.192, 5705.21, 5705.25; last day to certify resolution for school district income tax levy or renewal of conversion levy for May election to board of elections — RC 5748.02(C), 5705.219(G); last day to submit emergency levy for May election to board of elections — RC 5705.195; last day to submit phased-in levy or current operating expenses levy for May election to board of elections — RC 5705.251(A)*

- (90 days prior to election).
- 1 Northeast Region Executive Committee Meeting Virtual
- 4 Board Member 201 Independence and Mason
- 4 Northwest Region Executive Committee Meeting Virtual
- 7 Appreciology: The Art & Science of Appreciation..... Virtual
- 7 Southwest Region Executive Committee Meeting TBD
- 8 Central Region Executive Committee Meeting Virtual
- 11 Board Member 201 Columbus and Perrysburg
- 12 Southeast Region Executive Committee Meeting Logan
- 21 Coffee Chat: Purchasing 101 — What Board Members and School Districts Should Know Virtual
- 22 OSBA Master of Transportation Administration: Emergency transportation planning Columbus and virtual
- 28 OSBA Forum Virtual

March 2023

- 1 *Last day to take action and deliver written notice of nonrenewal of superintendent’s contract — RC 3319.01.*