



# A Legislative Report from Rep. Kenny Yuko

7th District of Ohio • Cities of Euclid and South Euclid, Richmond Heights and Collinwood



Kenny Yuko  
State Representative

## Dear Constituents,

It is with great excitement and anticipation that we begin the 128th General Assembly at the Ohio Statehouse. There is a new majority, a new Speaker of the House and a new commitment to the concerns and challenges we face in Ohio.

I appreciate the support you have shown in my ability to be your voice and champion in Columbus. It is a serious responsibility that I do not and will never take lightly. My pledge is to work as hard as I can to stand up for the issues important to you and find the common-sense solutions that will help turn around Ohio.

The challenges are great, and they come with a backdrop of the nation's economic crisis. Credit and housing markets continue to struggle, Wall Street's roller coaster ride endures, and consumer confidence remains very low. The new Administration in the White House, however, brings the promise for change that will benefit all Ohioans and all Americans.

Here in Ohio, our top priorities are shaped by the major issues affecting families across the state. The to-do list for the 128th General Assembly includes:

- Spurring job creation and economic opportunity
- Expanding access to affordable health care
- Reforming the primary/secondary education system, including how to finance it
- Investing in the industries and energy infrastructure that encourages the development of the jobs of the future
- Making higher education more accessible and affordable

The national economic crisis will make these challenges tough, but not impossible. We need to stand together — regardless of political party — to tackle these issues head-on and act in the best interests of Ohio's families.

I look forward to working with you as we seek these solutions. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact the office.

Sincerely,

**Kenny Yuko**  
State Representative

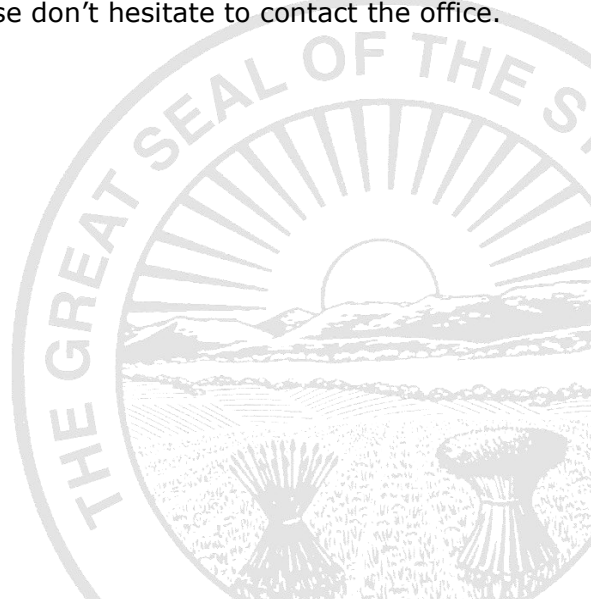
## CONTACT

### Columbus Office

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## Countdown Underway to Digital Television

*Your TV Set Could be Obsolete Soon*

On February 17, 2009, all full-power broadcast TV stations in the U.S. will stop broadcasting on analog airwaves and start broadcasting only in digital.

**The good news:** Digital broadcasting will allow stations to offer a better picture, better sound and more channels.

**The bad news:** If you watch TV on a conventional set with an antenna, your set will go dark soon unless you take action.

**What you can do:** Between now and the end of March 2009, you are eligible to request up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, to be used toward the purchase of up to two digital-to-analog converter boxes. You can get more information at [www.DTV2009.gov](http://www.DTV2009.gov).

If you have a newly-built TV or subscribe to a cable or satellite service, you should not be affected. Contact your provider to be sure.



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## How To Contact Representative Kenny Yuko

You have several options if you would like to contact Representative Kenny Yuko. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions and will do everything we can to help you. We also welcome invitations to speak to your group or organization.



### **Via Telephone (Columbus Office)**

*Direct Phone:* (614) 466-8012

*Toll-Free Messaging System:*  
(800) 282-0253

*Direct Fax:* (614) 719-0007



### **Via Electronic Mail (E-Mail)**

*To contact the office via e-mail, please use the following address:*

[district07@ohr.state.oh.us](mailto:district07@ohr.state.oh.us)



### **Via Postal Mail (Columbus Office)**

Hon. Kenny Yuko  
State Representative, 7th District  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77 South High Street, 11th Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

## HEAP Helps With Utility Bills

*Program Can Help You Pay High Cost of Heating Your Home*

Do you cringe when your energy bill comes in the mail? Do you worry about having enough money to keep your family both warm *and* fed? A program run through the State of Ohio could help.

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) helps eligible low-income families meet the high cost of home heating with one-time payment assistance.

HEAP includes several federally-funded programs, including Emergency HEAP and the Home Weatherization Assistance Program. One application to the Ohio Department of Development Office of Community Service covers them all.

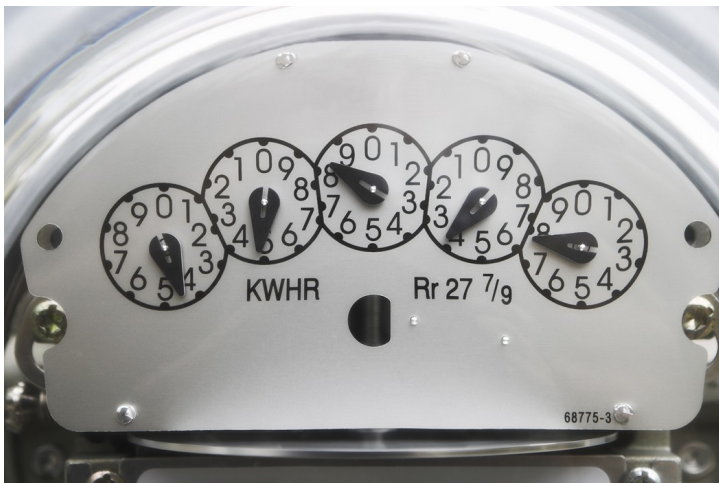


### **Am I Eligible?**

- Your income must be no more than 175% of federal poverty guidelines.
- Both homeowners and renters are eligible.

### **What is the Deadline?**

- You can apply now through April 30, 2009.



### **How Do I Apply?**

- Call HEAP toll-free at 1-800-282-0880 during regular business hours (7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) Monday through Friday. For the hearing-impaired with a telecommunication device for the deaf (TTD), call toll-free at 1-800-686-1557.
- You can download an application online from the Ohio Department of Development website: <http://development.ohio.gov/> or go to [energy-help.ohio.gov](http://energy-help.ohio.gov).

### **What About Emergency Help?**

- The Emergency, Winter Crisis, program is for people who are threatened with being disconnected, or if you have less than a 10-day supply of bulk fuel.
- The program is administered by your local Community Action Agency.

### **You Are Not Alone**

The National Energy Assistance Directors Association reports an estimated 15.6 million households owed nearly \$5 billion at the end of last year's heating season. It also says "home heating costs for (this) winter will reach record levels and cause severe hardships for low- and moderate-income households."

### **Utilities Must Work With You to Keep the Heat and Lights On**

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) has ordered the state's gas and electric companies to help you reconnect or maintain service, even if you are behind on your bill.

Customers who have had their service disconnected or are facing disconnection may use the plan to have service reconnected once between now and April 15, 2009. There is no income eligibility requirement to use the order. However, you must also sign up for one of the payment plans available to pay the past-due balance on your utility bill.

For more information, call PUCO's Consumer Call Center at (800) 686-PUCO (7826).

## Major Accomplishments in 127<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

*Successes Abound in Budget, Energy, Economic Stimulus*

The 127<sup>th</sup> General Assembly began with a changing of the guard in the Governor's office. Ted Strickland brought with him a vision for Ohio's future that focused on economic development, educational opportunity, energy reform and increased access to affordable health care. Through healthy debate and a spirit of compromise, our members won significant victories to benefit Ohioans for decades to come.

### The Budget

We were challenged to create a budget that allowed us to live within our means and invest in what matters. What we produced was the tightest budget in 42 years that *every single House Democrat supported*. It provided a solid foundation upon which to build a path to long-term prosperity in Ohio. Even when the national economic slowdown necessitated tough decisions to trim \$1.3 billion from the budget, Governor Strickland still managed to protect our core priorities that will shape Ohio's future.

The \$52 billion blueprint:

- Gave every parent working to send a child to college a virtual tax cut by **freezing public college tuition for two years**
- **Expanded access to affordable health care** for up to 20,000 children through the federal SCHIP program
- Provided property tax relief to **every senior and disabled homeowner – one in four homeowners overall** – through the expanded Homestead Exemption
- Secured **first-of-its-kind state funding** for breast and cervical cancer screenings for women
- Ensured a **dependable funding source** for local governments and libraries
- Increased education spending and funded the **largest public preschool expansion in 20 years**
- **Prioritized STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education** by appropriating money for STEM-related scholarships, incentives to draw world-class scholars to Ohio, and the creation of five new experimental STEM schools for grades 6-12

### Education

The educational components of the two-year budget stand as a good start in efforts to treat education as a K-through-16 commitment, reforming the system by which our children learn and grow. Governor Strickland embarked on an eleven-city tour of Ohio for "Conversations on Education," soliciting ideas on how to change the education system to suit our kids best. A new round of forums will discuss how to pay for that new system. All of this serves as prelude to a plan for education reform the Governor expects to unveil early in the year.

Besides the actions taken in the budget (newly-targeted investment, increases in per-pupil spending, parity aid, and poverty aid), Ohio recently initiated the new "**Seniors to Sophomores**" program, which allows high-achieving high school seniors to spend that last year studying at a college campus in Ohio. By the time they earn their high school diplomas, they already have a year of college credit under their belts. This makes Ohio a national model in terms of increasing affordability and accessibility of higher education, opening doors for young people to earn a college degree.

We also invested **\$250 million in new internships and co-op programs** for college students to build their skills and their resumes. It promises to create jobs and provide students a head start in finding good employment that keeps them in Ohio and gives them the opportunity to share their innovation and creativity with the state.



**Turn the page for more accomplishments.**

## Legislative Accomplishments: Continued

*Economic Stimulus, Energy Bills Provide Strong Foundation for Ohio Success*

### **Economic Stimulus Package**

That targeted investment in college education is part of the \$1.57 billion economic stimulus package we passed, ***the largest jobs package in recent Ohio history***. We are banking on our future, investing in our talent and providing the resources to help Ohio grow and prosper. This plan promises to ***create more than 57,000 good-paying, stable jobs*** that can redefine Ohio as a hub for commerce and creativity.

This ambitious plan focuses state dollars in needed areas to encourage development and attract new job-creating industries. It includes investment in: improving roads, bridges, broadband, water, and sewer systems; building new transportation hubs for commerce; strengthening our workforce; and supporting efforts to expand Ohio's bio-product initiatives and advanced energy portfolio.

### **Energy**

The energy initiatives in particular may help define our future prosperity as a state. The months-long debate over next-generation energy policy was a tough fight, but it finally produced legislation that protects consumers from electric rate spikes while positioning Ohio to retain and create thousands of jobs for our future. We have ensured a reliable, predictable, affordable power supply for consumers and businesses, and we have prevented utilities from collecting "excessive earnings" on the backs of ratepayers.

We also won bipartisan support for projects to promote renewable and alternative energy sources as a solution to our dependence on coal and foreign oil. We must have 25 percent of our energy come from alternative or renewable sources by the year 2025, and half of that generation must be based here in Ohio.

We succeeded on delivering five major victories:

- **Protect** consumers from electric rate spikes;
- **Prevent** sticker shock for businesses looking to invest in Ohio;

- **Position** Ohio for prosperity, including retaining and creating thousands of jobs;
- **Provide** a predictable, affordable, reliable power supply; and
- **Promote** renewable and advanced energy to protect environment and diversify our power grid.

This was a huge victory for ratepayers, business, and the environment, and I believe it sets the stage for a bright future in Ohio.

### **Great Lakes Compact**

The Great Lakes Compact was also critically important for Ohio's future. It protects one of our state's greatest natural resources – Lake Erie – from being raided by other entities thirsty for the freshwater it provides. We have now shielded this valuable resource and positioned Ohio for future economic development related to the lake.

We also secured new language to sharpen the focus on a Constitutional amendment that voters just approved governing private property rights for water flowing under or through a property. It specifies six sections of the Ohio Constitution to which the protection would apply, and it protects against the possibility of unintended consequences because of original language's broadness.

### **Payday Lending**

Payday lenders had become a predatory business model in Ohio, trapping people in a dangerous cycle of debt when they were already financially vulnerable. The legislation we created – and you supported at the polls in November – provides avenues for people to receive financial assistance. It protects people from outrageous fees and the 391-percent annual interest rate that lenders charged to customers. The new 28-percent cap, coupled with the financial education components of the law, will help families better manage their money and avoid a damaging debt cycle.

## Restoring Our Prosperity and Our Communities

*Statewide Conference Focuses on Cities as a Pathway to Ohio's Economic Future*

More than 1,000 leaders from across the state gathered in Columbus recently for the "Restoring Our Prosperity Summit," a forum on how to return Ohio's cities to their roles as the state's economic engines.

The summit, hosted by Greater Ohio and the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Institute, featured Governor Ted Strickland as well as hundreds of local leaders. It outlined a promising new strategy for Ohio's economy that focuses on the state's 32 "core communities." These are places from Akron to Zanesville which have been Ohio's historic regional centers, and investments in those centers may hold the key to Ohio's future economic growth and its global competitiveness.



Industries such as bioscience, alternative energy technologies like wind and solar, finance and advanced materials could provide the high-wage jobs of tomorrow. The summit's organizers argued that innovation, human capital, quality locations, and infrastructure are the

primary factors that attract and develop those industries. They noted that Ohio's core communities boast a high concentration of universities, hospitals, historic properties and dense infrastructure.

While the summit's panelists agreed that Ohio's policies have historically skewed against these communities, they cited recent initiatives such as the Department of Development's Economic Development Strategic Plan, the University System of Ohio's Strategic Plan, the Clean Ohio Fund and the Commercial Activities Tax (CAT) reforms as examples of programs that can turn Ohio's economy around.

Bruce Katz, Vice-President of the Brookings Institution and the summit's guest speaker, applauded these efforts and emphasized the need for "bold steps to enhance Ohio's ability to compete globally, build a strong middle class, and chart the path to a different energy and environmental future."

He further recommended a three-pronged approach to helping Ohio cities reclaim their place as drivers of the state's economy:

### 1. Set a vision

Develop a comprehensive statewide plan for reinvigorating urban areas, including smaller cities such as Mansfield and Springfield. This plan would include specific goals for accountability and focus the state's policies for urban revitalization in a cohesive manner.

### 2. Invest in assets

Target state and federal investments, such as transportation projects and school construction, so that Ohio leverages its strengths rather than spreading resources around "like peanut butter." With the state facing a budget crunch, capitalizing on the assets of Ohio's core communities would be a cost-effective approach that gives taxpayers more bang for their buck.

### 3. Collaborate to compete

Find new ways for local governments to cooperate, rather than compete over state and federal resources or race to the bottom on tax incentives to attract new companies. Since economies operate on a regional scope that ignores arbitrary political boundaries, Ohio cities should adopt regional approaches similar to cities like Munich and London to be globally competitive.

The summit's recommendations were detailed in a draft report called "Restoring Prosperity: The State Role in Revitalizing Ohio's Core Communities," available at [www.greaterohio.com](http://www.greaterohio.com). A final report will be released this spring.

Could this new plan be the catalyst for an economic Renaissance in our state? Possibly. Other states, including Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Illinois, have adopted many of the summit's recommendations with positive results. However, any long-term strategy for growth like the one presented by Greater Ohio will only bear results years down the road. This is the beginning of an important discussion on the future of Ohio's cities, and I as your State Representative would love to hear your thoughts.