



From the Desk of



Rep. Kenny Yuko

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Dear Neighbor,

As we move further into the 127th General Assembly, I am excited about the work that lies ahead of us.

Enclosed, you'll find an article on the current biennial budget which details the challenges we're facing at a time when Ohio's economy is growing slowly. I look forward to working with the other legislators, and though it won't be easy, I feel we can develop a budget that benefits all Ohioans.

Also included is information on winter heating costs that provides an update on high energy costs. With the sudden onslaught of blistery winter weather, the information included could help ease some winter woes.

Finally, I've included constituent updates on two current issues. The first details how you might be losing money by not claiming an Earned Income Tax Credit as part of your federal tax return. The second highlights a possible effort to increase legislative term limits to 12 years.

I hope you find the included information helpful. As always, I am proud to serve you. If you have any questions or comments about any state matter, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Kenny Yuko
State Representative





A Legislative Report from Rep. Kenny Yuko

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



Kenny Yuko
State Representative

General Assembly Faces Challenges With Budget

One of the most important tasks faced by the General Assembly is developing a two-year operating budget for the state of Ohio.

This year, the task may be more challenging than usual.

Ohio's slow economy means state revenue is falling well short of past projections. Governor Ted Strickland recently announced that revenue is only expected to grow by 1.4 percent and 0.9 percent during the next two fiscal years – well below the rate of inflation.

In fact, the next two fiscal years are expected to be so tight that some in the Statehouse have joked that a law enacted last year that calls for a 3.5 percent-per-year limit on state spending actually amounts to “big spending.”

It's clear that we will have some tough decisions to make in the months ahead.

I expect us to learn more about the budget situation in March, when Gov. Strickland presents a budget to the House of Representatives. It will then be up to us, as legislators, to come to an agreement on a final budget plan by June 30, the last day of the fiscal year.

For now, I can say that I believe it's important for us to live within our means and budget carefully, just like families do. That means looking for trade-offs and carefully setting priorities while still investing in those things that are truly important.

The work ahead will be challenging, but it's essential. The state budget is a basic blueprint for everything state government does – from repairing bridges and being good stewards of the environment to educating our children and protecting our most vulnerable citizens.

The state budget is perhaps the clearest expression of our priorities and values as a state, and I welcome your thoughts as this process begins to unfold.

An Oath of Honor



From left to right: Senator Lance Mason administers the oath of office to Representative Kenny Yuko as Pam Yuko holds the bible.

Winter Heating Solutions

Many of you may still be looking for information to help manage your winter heating costs and can find help at www.winterheat.ohio.gov. The site provides residential and business consumers with one convenient place to find all information about winter heating issues.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, the Ohio Consumers' Counsel and the departments of Development, Aging, and Job and Family Services all contributed to Ohio's Winter Heating Resource Center.

For more information, you can visit PUCO at www.puco.ohio.gov/PUCO.

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Are you Missing out on Money that Belongs to you?

It's hard to believe, but it's true. Each year, more than \$100 million that rightfully belongs in the pockets of hardworking Ohio families ends up bottled up in Washington.

The problem: Too many low- and moderate-income Ohioans are inadvertently leaving money on the table by not claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as part of their federal tax return.

The federal EITC is a refundable tax credit designed to reward low-income wage earners by creating an incentive to work. It entitles those who work for lower wages to receive a larger tax refund.

Eligibility is based on income and the size of a family for the credits, which can boost a tax refund by up to \$4,536. The credit is available to individuals who earned less than \$12,120 last year and to couples (with at least two children) who earned up to \$38,343.

Unfortunately, as many as 15 percent of Ohioans fail to claim the credit, which experts consider one of America's most effective anti-poverty programs. That means less money that could be in Ohio helping to fuel our economy and it means families are missing out on a tool that could help them stretch their resources farther.

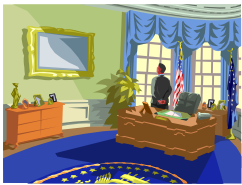
State Treasurer Richard Cordray has recently launched an effort to encourage more Ohioans to claim the EITC. If you or someone you know is missing out on this valuable credit, visit Cordray's Web page at www.ohiotreasurer.com call his office at (800) 228-1102 or contact the Internal Revenue Service at (800) 829-1040.



Term Limits Coming Under Scrutiny

Some of the issues we deal with in state government closely follow party lines. Term limits has never been one of them.

Back in 1992, more than two-thirds of voters – a bipartisan majority – supported an amendment to the Ohio constitution that generally limits state representatives and state senators to eight years in office.



The argument back then was that the legislature needed new blood and fresh ideas, and that too many public officials were treating the privilege of representing their constituents at the Statehouse as a birthright.

But the ensuing 14 years have given Ohioans a chance to see how term limits work in practice and there is a growing sense among Statehouse observers that there have been unintended consequences.

A recent study by the National Council of State Legislatures suggests that term limits have meant more partisanship and divisiveness. By the time legislators build relationships with their colleagues and gain a deep understanding of the issues, they have to prepare to leave. That can mean pressure for legislators to make their mark quickly – which can mean more confrontational styles and ineffective, ideological legislation.

With this in mind, the leaders of both major political parties in Ohio – Democratic Chairman Chris Redfern and Republican Chairman Robert Bennett – have suggested relaxing legislative term limits to 12 years. This, they argue, could inject more experience into the Statehouse and encourage legislators to take the long view as to what's in the best interest in Ohio.

I anticipate some discussion on this issue in the weeks and months ahead. Changing the constitution requires a vote of the people, which could be called by the General Assembly.

I'm interested in your thoughts on term limits. Have they been good for Ohio? Or can they be improved upon?

State of Ohio toll-free numbers and websites

Ohio House of Representatives

www.house.state.oh.us

Legislative Information 800-282-0253

Insurance, Department of

www.ins.state.oh.us

Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program 800-686-1578

Job and Family Services, Department of

www.state.oh.us/odjfs

Veteran Services Division 800-253-4060
Unemployment Compensation Hotline 877-644-6562

Motor Vehicles, Bureau of

www.state.oh.us/odps/division/bmv

General Information 800-589-TAGS

Public Safety, Department of

www.state.oh.us/odps

Highway Patrol 877-7-PATROL
Ohio Road Conditions 888-2OH-ROAD
State Highway Patrol DUI Hotline 800-GRAB-DUI

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

www.puc.state.oh.us

General Information 800-686-PUCO

Taxation, Department of

www.state.oh.us/tax

Form Requests 800-282-1782
Tax Questions 800-282-1780

Aging, Department of

www.state.oh.us/age

Golden Buckeye Card 800-422-1976
Ombudsman/Elder Rights Unit 800-282-1206

Attorney General

www.ag.state.oh.us

Consumer Protection 800-282-0515
Crime Victim Assistance 800-582-CVSS
Patient Abuse & Neglect Hotline 800-64-ABUSE

Consumers' Counsel, Office of the Ohio

www.state.oh.us/cons

Utility Consumer Complaints 877-742-5622

Development, Department of

www.odod.state.oh.us

General Information 800-848-1300
Business Advocacy 800-345-OHIO
Home Energy Assistance Hotline 800-282-0880
One Stop Business Permit Center 800-248-4040
Travel & Tourism 800-BUCKEYE

Education, Department of

www.ode.state.oh.us

Child Nutritional Services Information 800-808-MEAL
General Education Development 800-334-6679
Ohio Prevention Education Resources 800-788-7254

Environmental Protection Agency

www.epa.state.oh.us

E-Check Information 800-227-8378



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