



From the Desk of



Rep. Kenny Yuko

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Committees

Commerce and Labor

Criminal Justice

Local, Municipal Government
and Urban Revitalization

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Dear Neighbor,

With the holidays approaching, my colleagues and I are hard at work in Columbus trying to wrap up unfinished business before the 126th General Assembly draws to a close.

In this month's newsletter I wanted to review for you some important issues that recently won approval from voters during the last election.

Winter weather is upon us, and the price of natural gas is looming large. Simply put, home energy costs are putting customers in a bind and forcing them to make tough budgeting choices. Inside you will find information on programs designed to help those in need.

I've also provided some information on an important piece of legislation currently being considered by the legislature. House Bill 565, dubbed the 'Ohio Core,' calls for a more rigorous high school curriculum to prepare students academically for success in college and the workplace. I will be sure to keep you updated as it moves through the legislature.

I would like to take this opportunity to say how proud I am to represent House District 07. The past two years at the Statehouse have truly been a life learning experience, one that I will certainly cherish. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the citizens of Euclid, South Euclid, Richmond Heights and Cleveland for supporting me this year. It has been an honor to serve as your State Representative and I look forward to representing you in the 127th General Assembly.

However, you choose to celebrate this winter season, I wish you and yours the very best. Season's Greetings and have a happy, healthy New Year!!

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

Minimum wage hike

Ohio voters passed Issue 2, which raises the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.85 an hour. The rate will be adjusted annually for inflation.

Some 297,000 Ohio workers who now make less than \$6.85 an hour will get an average 80-cent-an-hour raise. Another 423,000 workers who make just over \$6.85 will likely see an average 26-cent increase. Voters in six other states also approved measures to raise state minimum wage by \$1 to \$1.70 an hour.

According to Policy Matters Ohio's executive summary from 2006, about three quarters of those affected (74 percent) are age 20 or older. Many (28 percent) are married, and about one in five is a parent. Approximately 253,000 Ohio children have a parent who would see a raise under this proposal. Families with workers who would see a raise rely on those workers for more than half of the families weekly earnings, on average.

I have been fighting for a wage increase for years. We value hard work and our principle has always been to reward it. Finally, workers—and the families who depend on them—will get the reward they deserve. We agree with Policy Matters Ohio's summary which indicates that a minimum wage increase is imperative to a successful economy which protects those who work hard for an honest living.

Legislative Perspective

The following bills were recently introduced for consideration:

House Bill 652 would give county auditors the authority to test fuel quality levels at local gas stations. The bill is intended to protect consumers from isolated cases of misconduct by station owners. Ohio is now one of just four states where gasoline is not inspected for quality. Nearly six billion gallons of gasoline are sold each year in Ohio – virtually all of it untested at the local level.

House Bill 660 would require each service plaza along the 241-mile Ohio Turnpike to include at least one pump offering E85, the environmentally-friendly, ethanol-based fuel.

Smoking ban approved

On Dec. 7, businesses and organizations will be required to comply with the new smoking ban, approved by voters in the November election. It generally prohibits smoking in restaurants, bars, workplaces, and nearly all other indoor places where the public congregates.

Ohio joins 16 other states with smoking bans to prohibit smoking in the vast majority of all public places, including all bars and restaurants. Affected entities must, by Dec. 7, 2006, (1) prohibit smoking; (2) post "No Smoking" signs; and (3) remove all ashtrays and other smoking receptacles.

While the law goes into effect on Dec. 7, it could be six months before the Department of Health writes the rules for enforcement and adopts a civil-fine schedule.

The Ohio Department of Health has established two toll free numbers to appear on the no-smoking signs: (866)-599-OHIO (6446) to report violations and (866)-634-7654 for general information.

Tip of the Month: Help Available to Quit Smoking

The Ohio Tobacco Prevention Foundations (OFTP) is now offering low-income smokers patches at a reduced price. They invested \$3 million in nicotine patch outreach and continue to have statewide success.



The foundation currently provides free telephone counseling, (800)QUIT-NOW, along with four weeks of nicotine patches at a cost of \$25. Smokers save \$75 by enrolling in this program. 42 percent of smokers who couple the telephone counseling with the patches successfully quit smoking, according to research done by the foundation. Only 26 percent of just-callers succeed in quitting.

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Ohio heat assistance programs

Despite best efforts to curb heating costs, many Ohioans find it difficult to pay ever-increasing utility bills. There is help for those who need it.

Last year, more than 257,000 lower-income Ohio households relied on help from the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) to assist them in paying heating bills through the winter. HEAP can be used only once per heating season (November 1 through April 15) and consumers whose income is 175% of poverty (\$16,748.00 for one person, \$22,453.00 for two persons) or less are eligible.

The Emergency-Home Energy Assistance Program (E-HEAP) provides payments to persons who have been disconnected or received a disconnection notice from their Utility Company. The payment is usually \$175 and like the HEAP program consumers whose income is 175% of poverty or less are eligible.

A Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) allows you, if qualified, to make gas and electric payments based on a percentage of household income. Payment levels are based upon the last 30 days of income and consumers whose income is 150% of poverty (\$14,355.00 for one person, \$19,245.00 for two persons) or less are eligible. Any amount not paid each month accumulates in a separate account and the customer is liable for the amount if they ever leave the PIPP program for any reason.

A winter reconnect order is generally issued by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio. This order requires regulated Gas and Electric Companies to accept a minimum payment of \$175 (even if you owe more) during the winter season to stop a disconnection or cause a reconnection, after a disconnection has occurred. There are no income qualifications and the order can only be used once during the winter season. If you do not qualify for E-HEAP, you can still use the winter reconnect order but you must come up with the \$175 yourself. Remember to contact the utility company that you will be paying and explain to them that you will be using the winter reconnect order.

General Assembly chews on 'Ohio Core'

Ohio ranks below the national average for college participation and degree attainment, with just 47 percent of Ohioans having completed some college, compared to 53 percent for the rest of the country. We also rank 40th nationally in the percentage of residents who have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

Over the coming weeks, the General Assembly will be debating the proposed 'Ohio Core,' which calls for a more rigorous high school curriculum, including increased requirements for science and mathematics.

'Ohio Core' will require students to complete four years of mathematics, including algebra II; four years of English; three years of lab-based science; including physical science and biology and one year selected from the areas of chemistry, physics or higher-level biology; three years of social studies; and two years of either foreign language, fine arts, career-tech, business or technology.

Beginning with the class of 2012, completion of the plan would be required to for admittance to one of Ohio's four-year public colleges or universities. A student would have until the end of his or her sophomore year to 'opt-out' of the plan but would then be required to complete at least 10 hours in college credit-bearing courses at a community college, technical college or university branch campus before being allowed to transfer to a state four-year institution of higher education.

Supporters of the plan argue that the proposal would help better prepare students for a technologically advanced workforce. And while few argue with that sentiment, there are still several concerns that need to be addressed before this proposal merits passage.

Others have expressed concern over funding for the plan, arguing that 'Ohio Core' is yet another unfunded mandate, forcing already cash-strapped schools to dig deeper into their pockets for the additional teachers needed to meet the plans demands.

Others fear that the state is creating a two-tiered system that promotes those deemed college material while pushing aside the rest.

This is a very important piece of legislation that deserves a great deal of attention and debate. I will be sure to keep you updated as it moves through the legislature.

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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