



From the Desk of



Rep. Kenny Yuko

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Dear Neighbor,

Jan. 2, 2007 marked the opening of the 127th General Assembly, and it is truly an honor to represent you. I look forward in the weeks and months ahead to working on legislation that moves Ohio forward.

As we begin the new year, it is clear that Ohio faces real challenges. More than 150,000 Ohio jobs have been lost during the past five years. Many of us are working longer hours and spending less time with our families in order to try to keep up. Too often, our young people move elsewhere in search of opportunity.

I believe we can do better.

We have a new governor on the way along with a whole new set of statewide office-holders armed with fresh new ideas. I am hopeful Republicans and Democrats can work together for the common good of all Ohioans.

Inside, you will find information on some of the legislation passed near the end of the 126th General Assembly. I've also included some information on the new indoor smoking ban and minimum wage increase recently approved by Ohio voters in the November election.

I am proud to serve you. As always, please feel free to contact me if you have questions or comments about any state matter that concerns you.

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



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State Representative

Legislature wraps up robust 'lame-duck' session

Normally the post-election days and weeks of a general assembly are reserved for wrapping up a few bits of unfinished business and sending off departing colleagues with our best wishes. But this year's "lame-duck" session was unusually busy as close to four dozen bills were fast tracked for passage in the General Assembly.

We were very busy; about 30 percent of all the bills sent to the governor's desk these past two years were enacted during the last six weeks of the 126th General Assembly.

On the good side of the ledger, the legislature overwhelmingly approved **House Bill 699**, the state's capital improvements bill. The \$1.8 billion appropriations measure contains funding various local community projects, along with funding for the construction of public school buildings, college and university buildings, and government facilities.

We also expanded prescription drug coverage by revising Ohio's Best Rx program. **House Bill 468** would extend discount prices to more families by making families earning as much as three times the federal poverty rate eligible.

The legislature also voted to require Ohio health insurers to cover patients with biologically-based mental illnesses in the same manner as physical ailments such as cancer and heart disease. **Senate Bill 116** should ensure a minimum standard of mental health insurance coverage to all Ohioans. This is a major victory for mental health advocates who have fought for nearly two decades for mental health parity.

We also made the public's right to know stronger by passing **House Bill 9**. Public offices that improperly withhold a public record could face fines through this legislation.

But not every piece of legislation passed without controversy. For example, Ohio voters overwhelmingly approved an increase in the state minimum wage this past November. Yet **House Bill 690** would exclude as many as 100,000 Ohioans, including home health care workers and some farm workers, from the minimum wage. I could not support this bill, which seems at odds with the measure voters just passed.

I also have deep concerns about **Senate Bill 117**, a proposal to limit consumer rights by limiting the amount of money consumers can win in damages from companies who defraud them. The bill also prevents cities or anyone else from using the state's public nuisance law to sue manufacturers of lead paint, which is a serious health hazard in many older neighborhoods. My fear is this bill may let companies off the hook for harming consumers.

The General Assembly also made major changes to the Ohio's core high school curriculum through **Senate Bill 311**, which includes new requirements for science and mathematics. It also requires students to complete the Ohio Core curriculum before they may be admitted to most of Ohio's four-year public universities.

While I agree our students need to be challenged to learn and grow and to receive the best education that they possibly can, many of us were concerned that school districts did not have enough time or funding to implement this plan.

These recent weeks have been busy and sometimes contentious at the Statehouse. My hope is that 2007 represents a new era for Ohio where Republicans and Democrats can work together more closely on policies that move all Ohioans forward.

CONTACT

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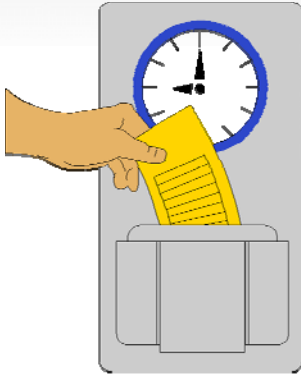
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Minimum wage rises to \$6.85 per hour

On Jan. 1, hundreds of thousands of low-income Ohioans received a pay raise.



Thanks to the overwhelming support of Ohio voters of Issue 2 in the November election, Ohio’s minimum wage increased from \$5.15 to \$6.85 per hour effective this new year. The new state constitutional amendment also ensures that Ohio’s minimum wage will be adjusted annually for inflation.

Men and women throughout Ohio will benefit. One study suggests that 297,000 Ohio workers who made less than \$6.85 an hour during 2006 will be receiving raises that average 80 cents per hour. Another 423,000 workers who earned just over \$6.85 per hour during 2006 will also receive raises of, on average, 26 cents per hour.

Studies also show that the stereotype of a minimum wage workers as a teenage fast food worker just aren’t true. According to Policy Matters Ohio, a Cleveland-based think tank, about 74 percent of those who could benefit from the increase are age 20 or older. More than one out of every four are married, and about one in five is a parent. In fact, more than a quarter million Ohio children have a parent who stand to earn more.

I support the minimum wage increase. If we value hard work as a society, then it is important to send the right message by rewarding it.

If you own a small business and have questions about complying with Issue 2, please call the Ohio Department of Commerce at (614)-644-2239 or visit the department’s Web site at www.com.state.oh.us.

Indoor smoking ban approved

Individuals and businesses are now required to comply with the new indoor smoking ban, approved by voters in the form of Issue 5 during the November election. The new state law generally prohibits smoking in restaurants, bars, workplaces, and nearly all other indoor places where the public congregates.

In enacting Issue 5, Ohio joined a growing movement among states to place tighter restrictions on second-hand smoke. Some 22 states now have some kind of a statewide smoking ban. Of them, 16 — including Ohio — prohibit smoking in the vast majority of all public places, including all bars and restaurants. Affected entities must (1) prohibit smoking; (2) post “No Smoking” signs; and (3) remove all ashtrays and other smoking receptacles.



It could be six months before the Department of Health writes the rules for enforcement and adopts a civil-fine schedule. Because the enforcement rules have yet to be approved, penalization for violating the smoking ban will be put on the back burner, at least for now.

Once the law is fully enforced, smokers could face a \$100 fine for lighting up in public. Businesses who violate the smoking ban face fines ranging anywhere from \$100-\$2,500. The amount of the fine is likely to increase with each repeat offense, but won’t exceed the maximum amount.

Some exemptions to the ban include: businesses with 80 percent of revenue from tobacco or tobacco products, family owned and operated businesses, most outdoor patios and designated smoking rooms in nursing homes, motels and hotels.

For more information on the new indoor smoking ban, including a look at proposed enforcement rules, visit the Ohio Department of Health’s Web site at www.odh.state.oh.us or call (866) 634-7654.

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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