



From the Desk of



Rep. Kenny Yuko

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Committees

Commerce and Labor,
Ranking Member

Criminal Justice

Health

Local and Municipal
Government and Urban
Revitalization

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Dear Neighbor,

The pace is starting to pick up here at the Statehouse. Recently, members were assigned to committees to begin reviewing legislation that touches on many of the challenges facing Ohio families, including rising health care costs and our struggling economy. Meanwhile, one of the legislature's most important tasks — setting a two-year budget for state government — is also underway.

In this newsletter, I've included an article to update you on what we know so far about the financial condition of Ohio and what that means to us as we develop a new state budget.

Also included is an article with tips on how to keep more fuel money in your pocket. With temperatures getting warmer, gasoline prices are likely to rise. Detailed in the article are ways to conserve gasoline and a Web site that can show you where inexpensive gasoline prices are in your area.

Finally, you will find helpful information regarding the 2006 tax season. Many changes have been made to tax laws and I've included an article on the Ohio I-File, a free Internet service that makes filing state tax returns a bit easier. Also included in the constituent update section is an article that will explain the Earned Income Tax Credit and how you may be eligible for a higher tax refund.

I hope this information finds you well and is useful. I am pleased to serve you, and if you have any other concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office for more information.

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 face 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.

With the recent downgrade of Ohio's credit outlook from stable to negative, it is imperative that we focus on improving our economy. Ohio's slow economy means state revenue is falling well short of past projections.

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."

Recently, Gov. Strickland has proposed the transportation budget for the biennium years of 2008 and 2009 to be \$3.9 and \$3.8 billion respectively. The budget will center on a reassessment of new projects and focus on transportation and public safety.

I expect us to learn more about the budget situation this month 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.

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.

Gas tips to keep more fuel dollars in your pocket

With spring on the horizon and summer on its way, it's a good bet that gasoline prices will start inching upward again, taking a bite out of the wallets of Ohio drivers, but there are simple steps everyone can take to conserve fuel and save money at the pump.

According to the AAA, one simple way to save on fuel is to avoid driving aggressively. If you consistently find yourself rushing to get to work on time, try leaving 10 minutes earlier to allow more time to drive the speed limit.

Also, consider carpooling with a colleague every other week to work or joining a friend when running errands around town. When running errands, make a list and plan your trip carefully so that you get all your errands done in one trip. Regular car maintenance will also help your car to conserve gasoline.



Another approach is to shop around before buying fuel. The federal Department of Energy maintains a handy Web site that includes links to several other sites on the Internet that survey pump prices in most metropolitan areas. Check it out at fueleconomy.com.

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Constituent Update

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 as part of their federal tax return.

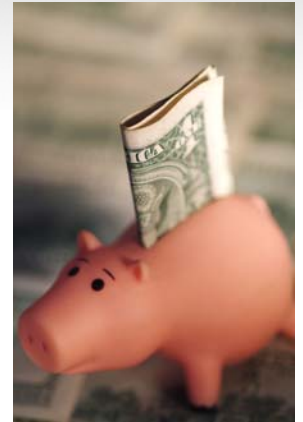
The federal EITC is a refundable tax credit designed to reward low-income wage earners by creating an incentive to work. It entitles those who work for lower wages to receive a larger tax refund.

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.

In time for the 2007 tax season, State Treasurer Richard Cordray has 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.org or call his office at (800) 228-1102, or contact the Internal Revenue Service at (800) 829-1040.



Ohio I-File helps ease tax return hassles



Tax season still tends to conjure visions of mounds of paperwork and long nights with a pen and a calculator.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

More and more Ohioans are turning to Ohio I-File, a *free* service that allows almost any taxpayer to file a return online.

In fact, if you still file the old-fashioned way – by mailing a return to Columbus – you are now in the minority. The Ohio Department of Taxation's Web site shows that now, more than half of Ohio's income tax returns are filed electronically.

There are two big advantages to trying Ohio I-File:

- **It speeds up tax refunds.** If you are due a refund and choose the direct deposit option, the money will be in your bank account in seven to ten days.
- **It saves taxpayer dollars.** It costs about three times as much to process a paper return as it does to process an electronic return.

For more information on Ohio I-File or any other question about filing your state income tax return, visit The Ohio Department of Taxation's Web site at tax.ohio.gov or call (800) 282-1780.

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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