



From the Desk of



Rep. Kenny Yuko

Kenny Yuko

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Committees

Commerce and Labor

Criminal Justice

Local & Municipal Govern-
ment and Urban Revitaliza-
tion

September 1, 2006

Dear Neighbor,

Fall is here and members of the Ohio House of Representatives will soon be returning to Columbus for some of the final meetings of the 126th General Assembly. As the end of the year draws closer, I wanted to review for you some important pieces of legislation I supported during the past year. Inside you will find highlights of some of our legislative successes.

One recurring theme to our work in Columbus has been making sure our state is doing all it can to support our servicemen and women now on the front lines overseas.

Thousands of Ohioans are on active duty today. I believe the sacrifices that these men and women are making on behalf of our state and our nation also places an obligation on us — to do what we can to lessen their burden.

Inside, you will find information on two pieces of recent legislation I supported that should further protect the families of our fallen soldiers.

You will also find a discussion of the importance of higher education and its critical importance in luring better paying jobs to Ohio.

With our statewide network of two and four-year public colleges and universities and a wide selection of private schools, it is difficult to think of a better place to get an education than Ohio.

Unfortunately, the price of tuition at our state's public universities has been growing by leaps and bounds in recent years. College students and their families are shouldering an ever growing share of the cost of higher education, making it difficult for Ohioans to better themselves and prepare for the high-skill jobs of the future.

I've also offered some thoughts on a recent Ohio Supreme Court ruling that grants the governor the ability to keep more records away from public view, and the implications for citizens' ability to hold their elected officials accountable.

My work in Columbus starts with you. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or comments about any state matters that concern 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

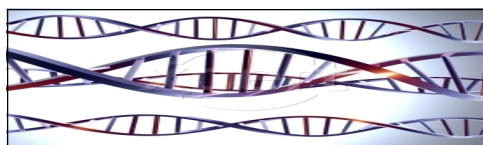


Kenny Yuko
State Representative

Legislative Perspective

Each year, the House of Representatives considers an enormous amount of legislation, and it can be difficult for citizens to keep up. Here is a review of the legislation that was enacted this year with my support.

Senate Bill 185 addresses deceptive lending practices such as artificially inflating a home's appraisal value so the borrower takes on more debt than the home is worth. Another tactic targeted by this bill: hiding costs such as insurance and taxes from consumers.



Ohioans who believe they have been wrongly convicted of a crime will have a chance to prove their innocence through DNA testing. **Senate**

Bill 262 permanently allows certain state prisoners to seek DNA testing that might prove their innocence. Some 307 prisoners have sought testing through earlier temporary programs.

House Bill 245 devotes \$1 million to help gas stations add E85 pumps and tanks and to help bulk ethanol terminals expand. Ethanol is a clean-burning fuel that may reduce America's dependence on foreign oil.



House Bill 461 increases the sentence for aggravated vehicular homicide to a mandatory term 10 to 15 years in prison if the offender has three or more convictions for operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated within the previous six years, or two or more prior felony convictions.

Tip of the Month: Prescription Drug Discount

Ohio's Best Rx is a drug discount card program designed specifically for Ohioans without prescription drug insurance. If you are over the age of sixty, or if your annual income is less than about \$24,000 for a single person or \$48,400 for a family of four you may be eligible for a Ohio's Best Rx card that means access to discount prices on prescription drugs. For more information on Best Rx or for an application:

OHIO'S BEST RX
P.O. BOX 408
TWINSBURG, OH 44087-0408
(866) 923-7879
www.ohiobestrx.org



Executive Privilege and Open Government

In April, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled for the first time in Ohio's history that governors can hide documents under an "executive privilege" and that people would have to show a special need for any records they request. This is the only state office where executive privilege exists.

Then, on July 21st, the justices strengthened their first ruling by judging that weekly memos would not be made available unless an individual could show a "particularized need" for the records. This begs the question: How can an Ohioan show a particularized need for a report before they know what the document says?

Ohio used to have strong open-record laws and now the highest court needs to privately view the executive records before a citizen can read them.

If this Governor and future governors are allowed this "privilege," what will they hide from the public? The legislature has the opportunity to change this decision. The legislature is looking for ways to limit this privilege in order to maintain a transparent government. After all, the records do belong to the citizens of Ohio.

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College Tuition on the Rise

Experts agree: One of the best ways to get our economy moving again is to ensure Ohio's citizens have the tools to compete for the high-skill, high-paying jobs of the future.

But sadly, Ohio has long lagged behind when it comes to higher education. Ohioans are less likely to hold four-year degrees than citizens in other states. In fact, if Ohio only wanted to catch up to the national average, it would mean putting another 439,000 Ohioans through college – nearly the population of the city of Cleveland.

A big factor here is cost. For years, tuition has grown faster than families' paychecks, making it increasingly difficult to afford a higher education. At Ohio State University, a year's worth of tuition and fees have doubled – to \$8,667 – since the 2000-01 school year. Other public universities across Ohio have enacted similar increases.

The problem is so acute, in fact, that the *Measuring Up 2004*, the national report card on higher education, gave Ohio an "F" when it comes to affordability. The truth is, many of our young people are being priced out of a college education and a shot at a brighter future.

Why? State funding of higher education has not kept up with costs. As it stands, only ten other states spend less per student on public colleges and universities.

I believe we need to re-order our priorities so that that higher education is a more important part of what we do here in Columbus.

If we wonder why high-paying jobs are available in neighboring states but not here, if we ask why personal income continues to decline in Ohio, then we need look no further than higher education. Many employers simply won't be drawn to our state if they don't believe our citizens have the skills necessary to do the work.

True Sacrifice: Veterans and their Families



With thousands of Ohioans now on active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan the need to give our servicemen and their families the support they deserve has become even more critical.

The legislature has put forth several common sense ideas for making the burden a little lighter for military families now sacrificing so much in service to our nation. Two bills that passed with my strong support are scheduled to become law this month:

House Bill 576

Through this legislation — long championed by Rep. Peter Ujvagi, D-Toledo — the spouses of servicemen and women who lose their lives while on combat duty will soon be eligible for free tuition at any Ohio public university.

I supported this legislation because I am mindful of the words of Abraham Lincoln chiseled in marble in the rotunda of the Ohio Statehouse: "Care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan."

The loss of a breadwinner can have devastating consequences on any family. For many single parents, a college education may be the key to unlocking a brighter, more prosperous future. Offering war widows a chance, through hard work, to provide a better future for their children seems the least we can do.

HB 576 goes into effect on September 4, 2006.

House Bill 484

The "Let Them Rest In Peace Act" sponsored by Rep. John Bocchieri, D-New Middletown, was passed in response to an extremist group that has taken to demonstrating at the funerals of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, holding signs that say "Thank God for Dead Soldiers" and "You're Going to Hell." The Kansas-based group has protested in Ohio several times.

The bill prohibits picketers and protestors from engaging in protest activities within 300 feet of the site of a funeral, funeral procession, or burial service from one hour before to one hour after the service concludes.

The question this legislation tries to settle is where the right to protest ends and where a family's right to privacy begins. I believe that line begins 300 feet away from a grieving family mourning the loss of a loved one.



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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