

THE CORD REPORT

The official quarterly newsletter of CORD Ohio



UPDATE ON DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT POSITION

We are in the final stages of hiring a new Director of Membership Development to coordinate the affairs of CORD. It will be a part-time position, but one of great benefit for CORD's members, our liaison with our lobbyist, and others. Stay tuned for more updates on this position.

ANNUAL CORD DUES STATEMENTS GO OUT SOON!

The CORD office has mailed out the annual dues statements for 2019 membership. Please consider becoming a member of CORD. Regional districts, like every other political subdivision, need a strong team approach to assure an effective position with Ohio's legislature. Contact Catina Taylor, CORD Executive Assistant with any questions at (614)-464-4414 ext. 5

WHAT'S IN OUR LATEST ISSUE:

UPDATE ON POSITION

**ANNUAL CORD DUES
STATEMENTS**

LOBBYIST UPDATE

**FROM A BURNING
RIVER...**

AND MORE!



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

COALITION OF OHIO REGIONAL DISTRICTS

Although we are just six months into the 133rd Ohio General Assembly, CORD has been actively monitoring over two dozen bills that could impact 6119 districts. Of all the bills introduced this legislative session, none will have a bigger impact than the state's massive, \$69 billion two-year operating budget. The measure (HB 166) is currently pending before the Ohio Senate. The bill, which has been debated since Governor DeWine introduced the proposal in March, includes across the board tax reductions as well as an innovative proposal called the H2Ohio program aimed at tackling water quality issues in Ohio. The governor originally allocated \$900 million to the program over the next ten years. The House revised the plan to include funding for the first year (roughly \$86 million) and proposed a separate bill (HB 7) designed to create a long-term funding source for the program. HB 7 also creates an H2Ohio Advisory Council charged with overseeing the program. The Senate has also introduced legislation aimed at improving water quality in Ohio. SB 2 would create a statewide watershed planning structure to be administered by the Department of Agriculture. According to the bill's sponsors, Senators Bob Peterson and Matt Dolan, the bill will help coordinate efforts with a watershed planning and management coordinator who will be assigned to a watershed or a combination of watersheds. While the bill is primarily designed to encourage efficient crop growth, soil conservation and water protection methods, amendments were added that would improve the operations of regional water and sewer districts. Currently, Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Chapter 6119 has arbitrary language that has the potential to limit a district's ability to partner with private entities on projects. Additionally, language in ORC Chapter 6119 is confusing on whether districts are able to offer discount programs to customers under the age of 65. The amendments added to SB 2 clarify these sections to ensure that 6119 districts can partner with private entities and have the flexibility to offer discount programs that best benefit their customers. CORD has been an active stakeholder that has been involved in the development of all these proposals, assisting in their creation and testifying in support of the proposals during the committee process.

Although the state operating budget has attracted most of the attention recently, other bills have been introduced and advanced since the start of the 133rd General Assembly. CORD has worked closely with legislators on the development of HB 46, which would require the Ohio Treasurer of State to create and maintain the Ohio State Government Expenditure Database to improve government transparency and accessibility for Ohioans. The bill would require state agencies to report expenditures to the State Treasurer's office, which will then be made available to the public in the form of a searchable database. CORD worked closely with the sponsor as well as the chairman of the House State and Local Government Committee to clarify that the reporting requirements did not apply to 6119 districts. We have also been closely monitoring legislation aimed at protecting water and wastewater facilities from protesters attempting to damage "critical infrastructure" facilities. The bill, SB 33, is a reintroduction of legislation from last session. CORD testified in both the House and Senate and hopes the bill will be passed and signed within the coming weeks.

Lawmakers are required by the Ohio Constitution to enact the main operation budget by June 30th, at which point they will recess, putting all legislative activity on hold until the fall. During this time, it will be important to continue to monitor and track administrative rules, which will continue to be promulgated by state agencies and can have significant impacts on our members' operations.



FROM A BURNING RIVER TO A RIVER REBORN.

NORTHEAST OH REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT

This June marks the 50th anniversary of the last Cuyahoga River fire.

On June 22, 1969, it happened. After enduring years of abuse, a spark from a passing railway car landed on the oil-covered surface of the river. The Cuyahoga River caught fire just before noon and thrust Cleveland into the national spotlight.

In 1969, the Cuyahoga's burning captured the public's imagination and ignited a growing environmental movement. More than a century after the river's pollution was first noted, the Cuyahoga River became an international symbol of environmental neglect. Cleveland's Mayor at the time, Carl Stokes, a long-time advocate for environmental responsibility and environmental justice, openly criticized the federal government and vowed to fight for a cleaner river.

It's important to note that our story isn't unique to Cleveland. In many industrial cities across the country, burning rivers were commonplace. And this fire, although the most famous, was not the only fire on the Cuyahoga River. Many people don't know that our river burned a total of 13 times, often deadly or financially disastrous. In 1912, a blaze killed five men. A 1952 fire caused \$1.5 million in damage, equivalent to nearly \$15 million today. The Cuyahoga River fire was integral to the start of the national environmental movement. It led to the Clean Water Act and US EPA, and provided the foundation for years of environmental progress since 1969.

In 1969, the Cuyahoga River was declared "dead" by national media, yet today is home to more than 60 species of fish. As we're heading towards the 50th anniversary of the most infamous Cuyahoga River fire, we celebrate the fact that the River is no longer on fire. Wildlife has made a comeback, we are seeing high biological scores in our waterways and even bald eagles have made the Cuyahoga River home.

Since the Sewer District was formed in 1972, we have invested \$5 billion in our region's sewer and stormwater infrastructure. This includes upgrades and expansion at our three wastewater treatment plants, construction of new interceptor sewers – Cuyahoga Valley, Heights-Hilltop, Northwest and Southwest – to carry sanitary flow to the plants, development of the Regional Stormwater



Management Program to address flooding, erosion and water quality problems, and completion of the Euclid Creek Tunnel and Tunnel Dewatering Pump Station as part of Project Clean Lake to manage combined sewer overflow.

The Sewer District's industrial pretreatment program has had a huge impact on the health of the Cuyahoga River. In addition to wastewater from homes and commercial facilities, the Sewer District also receives wastewater from industrial facilities. Industrial wastewater may contain pollutants that are not typically found in the wastewater from a home and we must ensure that wastewater discharged from industrial facilities meets EPA standards under the Clean Water Act.

The Westerly Storage Tunnel, the fourth tunnel constructed under Project Clean Lake, will also help to reduce CSOs impacting the Cuyahoga River. This \$135 million project is under construction and will be complete in 2020. The WST system will help control overflows at two locations along the Cuyahoga River and reduced combined sewer overflow pollution to the environment by 328 million gallons per year.

There are many events taking place this June to commemorate the Cuyahoga River fire, and the Sewer District invites you to celebrate 50 years of a river reborn with us.

A list of events is here:

<https://www.neorsd.org/riverreborn-community-event-calendar/>

If you can't join us in person, join us on social media using #RiverReborn.