

# THE CORD REPORT

The Official Quarterly Newsletter of CORD



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# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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## **"Lame Duck" for the 135th General Assembly**

The "lame duck" sessions of the 135th General Assembly are upon us - referring to the period after the election, but before the end of the calendar year. There are only a handful of session days left before the clock starts over for the 136th General Assembly, beginning on January 6, 2025.

The 135th GA is set to have their final session days no later than December 18th, but we could see them adjourn sooner if they are able to accomplish what they hope to achieve for the remainder of the year. By the time you read this it may well be all over and we will update you as usual on other developments. CORD will also provide you with advisories of guidance on how to implement or comply with any new acts that become law in the new year.

Below, please find a summary, along with the very latest status, of several pieces of legislation that CORD is monitoring. Please contact Michael Guastella at Governmental Policy Group if you have any questions.

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## **HB 93 - Tax Liens on Water Bills**

**Summary:** House Bill 93 is legislation that, if enacted, would prohibit a municipality from having the ability to place a lien on a property that is owned by someone who is not the occupant of that property due to unpaid water bills. Today, if a renter does not pay their water bill and moves away, the property owner/landlord is liable for the unpaid water bills. If the owner fails to pay, and that property is in the service territory of a municipality, the municipality can place a tax lien on the property until the bills are paid. This bill would remove the municipality's ability to place the lien for that reason, and the municipality would be left to find other means of finding payment for the account. An important point to make for our purposes is that 6117 districts and 6119 districts are not currently in this bill. So, while CORD members are currently not affected by HB 93, we remain on the sidelines ready to oppose the bill should we become included.

### **HB 93 - Tax Liens on Water Bills** (CONTINUED)

**Status:** Passed House 63-26 on December 13, 2023; Has had three hearings in the Senate Local Government Committee. Most recently, the bill was heard for opponent testimony on November 19, 2024. Committee members have expressed generic support of the provisions of this bill, but opponents have laid out several components of the bill that may be unintended consequences of the current version. The committee must decide the fate of the bill by the end of the GA for it to pass. If the bill is reported out of committee, and then passed by the Senate, it then would only need to be signed by Governor DeWine to be enrolled and ultimately enacted 90 days thereafter.

### **HB 257 - Virtual Meetings**

**Summary:** House Bill 257 would allow many public bodies to meet virtually to conduct certain business. Introduced by Reps. Hoops and Claggett in August of last year, dozens of stakeholders came out to support this bill, which would make it easier to obtain quorums in public meetings and allow the flow of business to occur. Several changes have been made throughout the legislative process for HB 257, including limiting what business can occur virtually, mandating that real-time video conferencing software be utilized in favor of a simple conference phone bridge line, and disallowing certain relatively high-profile bodies to utilize virtual meetings by excluding them from the legislation. CORD members have spoken very favorably on this bill and are overall encouraged by the prospect of having this new permissive authority. To that end, CORD testified in support of HB 257 on June 26, 2024.

**Status:** Passed the House 74-3 on November 29, 2023; Has had four hearings in the Senate Government Oversight Committee, most recently on December 4, 2024. After initially hearing that this legislation is not a priority of the Senate, the committee to which the bill is assigned has had four hearings on it. CORD is working with other proponents to encourage the committee to adopt the bill by the end of the GA.

### **HB 327 - E-Verify**

**Summary:** House Bill 327 would require political subdivisions, including Regional Water and Sewer Districts and government contractors to utilize E-Verify, the software created by the US Department of Homeland Security to verify an individual's ability to legally work in the United States. This would include contractors who work with 6119 districts. CORD was actively involved in amending this legislation. As introduced, the liability would have been on the District to obtain proof that a contractor uses e-verify, and that a contractor hired individuals and subcontractors that passed e-verify. As passed by the House, that liability now solely exists with the contractor. CORD remains an interested party to this bill.

**Status:** Passed 85-6 on June 12, 2024; referred to the Senate General Government Committee has had two hearings, most recently on December 3, 2024 for proponent testimony.

### **HB 491 - Local Government Expenditures**

**Summary:** House Bill 491 would require political subdivisions, including villages and 6119 districts, to provide information on expenditures to the Ohio Treasurer for inclusion in the State and Local Government Database. This legislation is an extension of the "Ohio Checkbook" initiative, meant to provide the citizens of Ohio with greater transparency. CORD is opposed to this legislation, as it would put an undue burden on the smaller districts. CORD worked with the Ohio Rural Water Association to develop opponent testimony, which ORWA delivered to the House State and Local Government committee on June 11, 2024.

**Status:** Has had two hearings in the House State and Local Government committee, most recently on June 11, 2024. Candidly, it seems very unlikely this bill will pass this General Assembly, only for the simple fact of there is very little time remaining in this year's session.

# LOOKING INTO THE 136TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**Michael Guastella**  
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*Between retirements, chamber "swaps", new leadership in both Chambers, new districts, and the 2024 elections, the 136th GA is shaping up to look much different than the 135th GA.*

## **Expected Leadership for the 136th General Assembly**

The four caucuses - the Senate Republicans, Senate Democrats, House Republicans, and House Democrats - have each elected their next wave of leaders. Here is who we can expect to be in leadership roles after a formal vote in early 2025.

### **Senate Republicans**

President of the Senate  
Sen. Rob McColley (Napoleon)  
President Pro Tempore  
Sen. Bill Reineke (Tiffin)  
Majority Floor Leader  
Sen. Theresa Gavarone (Bowling Green)  
Majority Whip  
Sen. George Lang (West Chester)

### **Senate Democrats**

Minority Leader  
Sen. Nickie Antonio (Lakewood)  
Assistant Minority Leader  
Sen. Hearcel Craig (Columbus)  
Minority Whip  
Sen. Kent Smith (Euclid)  
Assistant Minority Whip  
Sen. Beth Liston (Dublin)

## **Makeup of Each Chamber by Political Party**

The 2024 General Election resulted in shifting demographics in every corner of the state, compounded with a new set of House and Senate districts for legislators to campaign in. This all resulted in a net gain of two seats for House Democrats and two seats for Senate Democrats. Republicans still have supermajorities in both Chambers.

### **Ohio House of Representatives**

Republicans: 65  
Democrats: 34

### **Ohio Senate**

Republicans: 24  
Democrats: 9





## TOP DRAWER REGIONAL DISTRICTS: LICKING REGIONAL WATER DISTRICT - A VISION OF GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY: THE JOURNEY OF THE LICKING REGIONAL WATER DISTRICT

**Written By: Jim Roberts**  
**Executive Director**  
**Licking Regional Water District**



So much has changed in Licking County in the 35 years since the utility, now known as the Licking Regional Water District, came into existence. Portions of the rural county are ranked among the fastest-growing regions in the state, and our community is emerging as a Midwestern epicenter of the semiconductor industry so crucial to the 21st century economy. Yet even as the county's western edge is transformed through economic development and our operations triple in capacity in reaction, our commitment remains the same as ever: providing safe drinking water and reliable wastewater treatment to our customers.

Our utility's roots date to 1989, when we were first established as the Southwest Licking Community Water and Sewer District. The area at the time was experiencing a high rate of deteriorating septic systems and the failure of package plants. With the environmental damage taking place, something had to be done. After all, reliable water and sewer services form the foundation of public health, economic development, and quality of life. When a utility is created to manage these services, our goal is singular: to allow our customers to safely thrive whether we're supporting a farm, a new neighborhood, or a cutting-edge manufacturing facility.



With prompting from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, our water district formed as an independently managed and operated governmental entity. Our first service operations encompassed the western Licking County townships of Etna, Lima (becoming the City of Pataskala via merger), and Harrison. For most of our history since then, we operated as a small utility gradually increasing our customer base to nearly 8,000 customers. Although growth was clearly in the picture, the first significant change in the scope of our responsibilities came in 2010 when the county commissioners, observing the widening of State Route 161 and the subsequent expected growth of that corridor, determined that an entity was needed to provide utilities for that growth and selected our utility to serve in that role.

That agreement was amended in 2013 and expanded our responsibilities to include sections of routes 310 and 37, both of which ran through areas experiencing residential and commercial growth.

The impact of the Intel Corp. announcement on both the western half of Licking County and the Licking Regional Water District has been and will be seismic. Certainly, our portion of the county was no stranger to growth even before the Intel plan made news beginning in January 2022, thanks to the region's ongoing addition of large warehouse operations and major high-tech data centers.

Nevertheless, the semiconductor's arrival promises an unprecedented amount of commercial, residential, and retail growth. The \$20 billion investment, currently consisting of two fabrication plants—or "fabs"—is unfolding on hundreds of acres of formerly rural acreage. Based on Intel's experience with their facility in Chandler, Arizona, we estimate the completed factories will employ up to 3,000 people, many of them in high-paying technical positions. Just as significantly, the presence of Intel is expected to have an enormous economic ripple effect as Intel suppliers flock to the region, bringing with them hundreds of new employees and potential residents.

Our challenge at the Licking Regional Water District is to service the non-Intel growth created by that economic ripple effect, and with this growth in mind, our service area was expanded to include the entirety of the unincorporated areas of Jersey, Monroe, and St. Albans Townships. With this addition to our service area, we have effectively doubled the footprint of our District, and our master planning shows that we will need to quadruple our water and sewer capacities over the next 15 years. This is a dramatic change for the District in terms of our historic responsibilities, but a challenge we are excited about meeting.

Projects we have underway speak to our commitment to excelling in our next chapter. The \$6 million Union Township Water Line project, for example, is expected to come online in 2025 and will extend water service to areas identified for commercial and industrial development at the I-70 and S.R. 37 corridor. We are partnering with the Union Township to fund this project through economic development incentives, ensuring that development pays for itself, thereby protecting existing customers from financial burdens. The project is also an example of how growth is occurring throughout the county, and how our District has the capability to service development wherever it occurs in Western Licking County.

A much bigger project, the \$85 million Wagram wastewater plant, has been under construction for about a year and is on schedule, slated to begin operations in 2026. This state-of-the-art facility will process about 2.5 million gallons of wastewater daily, alleviating capacity issues and supporting sustainable development in the booming communities of Etna and the City of Pataskala.

Finally, after the Intel announcement was made, our utility purchased nearly 100 acres in St. Albans Township for the construction of the Raccoon Creek Wastewater Center. This facility is being designed to support the new growth in the State Route 161 corridor. This new plant will also help maintain water quality in the region and is being designed to be among the first in the state to have Water Reuse capabilities. By using advanced technologies and sustainable practices, we aim to balance development needs with the health of our local ecosystems. In this regard, I cannot emphasize enough how seriously we take our role as environmental stewards. Our water treatment processes are designed not only to meet but to exceed regulatory standards, ensuring that the water we return to the environment is clean and safe.

With so much growth in the works, in 2024 we rebranded ourselves as the Licking Regional Water District, a move meant to reflect our broader regional focus and evolving role in the community. Along with this rebrand we expanded our existing three-person Board of Trustees to include a representative from Jersey Township and an at-large member, thus ensuring that our governance structure reflects the diverse communities we serve. These changes are not just symbolic; they represent a renewed commitment to collaboration, transparency, and equitable service delivery. This evolution was also made possible by the dedication of our staff, the guidance of our board, and the trust of our community.

As we tackle these exciting new opportunities, it's important to review the role that utilities like ours play in the economic ecosystem. We are by nature and design reactive to new development opportunities. Rather than constructing new water and wastewater service lines in the hopes that development will follow, we follow the lead of governmental entities such as townships and the county as they determine which areas to zone for development. In short, we only seek to extend service lines at the direction and based on the comprehensive planning of local government entities. For example, although we have been the service provider of the entirety of Harrison Township since 1989, nearly half of the township remains unserved because the township has not sought dense development, and consequently, we have not been asked to extend service to its rural areas. Similarly, we will follow the lead of our new partners in the Intel-era development: figuring out how to service areas where they need us, and not getting involved in areas they don't plan to expand into.

Secondly, we are by law a governmental entity, not a private corporation that might be beholden to shareholders. We are a 6119 district, which is a type of "special district" with our own statutory authorities, similar to a fire district, a distinction that occasionally gets lost in the shuffle as residents react to our role in providing service to new developments. In that guise, we work closely with local officials to establish economic development funding mechanisms like Joint Economic Development Districts and Tax Increment Financing, ensuring the new growth funds the infrastructure that is required. These partnerships are the foundation of our success, enabling us to deliver high-quality services while supporting the region's economic ambitions.

In the end, we at the Licking Regional Water District have pledged to manage the unprecedented growth in our county in an economically and civically responsible way. That includes the ongoing agreements with our County Commissioners to responsibly manage the region's economic development goals. First and foremost however, our pledge means honoring our commitments to our current and longstanding customers who value our role in providing them drinking water and healthy, environmentally friendly wastewater treatment. We will continue to do that, even as we pursue the new opportunities that have been presented to us in a way that promotes safe, healthy, and sustainable economic growth for all.



# LICKING REGIONAL WATER DISTRICT OVERVIEW



## **History**

The Licking Regional Water District (LRWD), formerly known as the Southwest Licking Community Water and Sewer District, was established in 1989. Its inception was driven by the need to address environmental issues and support the burgeoning growth in Licking County. The District's recent name change symbolizes its expanded role and commitment to regional development and sustainability.

For over a decade, LRWD has been actively involved in a strategic partnership with the Licking County Commissioners focusing on the development of the State Route 161 Corridor. Throughout its history, the District has collaborated with municipalities and townships to strategically manage the area's infrastructure growth. Examples of these collaborations include Jersey Township, Union Township and the Village of Kirkersville.

## **Service Area and Customers**

The LRWD provides services to a diverse clientele comprising of residential, commercial, and industrial users across several areas in Licking County, including Jersey, Etna, Harrison, and Union townships, and the City of Pataskala. The District is instrumental in supporting the region's expansion, particularly with significant developments that are expected as a result of the Intel semiconductor facility.

## **Board of Trustees**

The governance structure includes representatives from Jersey, Union, Etna, and Harrison townships, the City of Pataskala serving four-year terms, and an at-large member serving a two-year term. This fosters a balanced and representative board to oversee LRWD's operations and strategic initiatives.

## **Water System**

The District manages an extensive network, including over 200 miles of water mains and several water towers, ensuring effective distribution. It delivers an average of 3 million gallons of water daily from its treatment plant located at 8675 York Road. Key initiatives to enhance this system include the Union Township Water Line Project, a \$5 million effort to extend water services and support commercial and industrial growth to the Interstate Route 70 and State Route 37 corridor, with Phase I anticipated to be completed in 2025.





### **Sewer System**

With a wastewater treatment plant at 8720 Gale Road having a capacity of 4.3 million gallons per day, and plans for further expansion with facilities like the Raccoon Creek project, LRWD ensures efficient wastewater management that adheres to environmental standards. Additionally, the District's new \$85 Million Wagram Wastewater Treatment Center, set to open in 2026, will process 2.5 million gallons of wastewater daily, significantly increasing capacity to meet growing demand.

### **Environmental Stewardship**

LRWD prioritizes sustainability, investing in technology and infrastructure to mitigate issues like agricultural runoff and to upgrade aging systems, thereby maintaining high environmental standards.

### **Rates and Financials**

Operating on an annual budget of approximately \$15 million, LRWD manages its finances to ensure service affordability while funding necessary infrastructure enhancements. Rates are periodically reviewed to balance these objectives.

### **Leadership and Staff**

Under the leadership of Executive Director Jim Roberts, Operations Director CJ Gilcher, and Chief Legal Counsel Nick Eippert, LRWD employs a dedicated team of 30 across various departments including administration, engineering, customer service, and operations, all focused on maintaining service excellence.

### **Summary**

LRWD has positioned itself as a critical component of Licking County's infrastructure, committed to fostering growth while ensuring environmental integrity. As the region continues to develop, the District's role in providing essential utilities and promoting sustainable practices becomes ever more vital.



# JOHN SIMPSON RETIRES FROM LE-AX REGIONAL WATER DISTRICT



John Simpson  
General Manager



John Simpson  
General Manager

Congratulations to John Simpson who recently retired as General Manager of the Le-Ax Regional Water District. Le-Ax was formed in 1968 and now serves the Village of Albany and nearly 7,000 customers (20,000 residents) in 17 townships in Athens, Hocking, Meigs, and Vinton counties. In 2014 Le-Ax received first place as the "Best Tasting Rural Water in Ohio".

John has also served as Chair of the Legislative Committee, Vice President and President of the Ohio Rural Water Association (ORWA). He received the Ohio Rural Water Manager of the Year Award in 2012 from ORWA and is the 2017 recipient of the John Wolfe Award, the organization's most coveted award.

John grew up in Stewart, an unincorporated area in Athens County, and went to Federal Hocking High School. He and his high school sweetheart, Carol, have been married for over 40 years and are the proud parents of two married sons.

Prior to joining Le-Ax John had already completed another career and brought his management and supervisory skills with him. For 27 years, John worked for McBee Systems in Athens where he worked himself up from a worker on the production floor to the Director of Operations, overseeing production in Ohio, Virginia, Utah, and Georgia. McBee was a printing company (originally McBee Binder Co, formed in 1906 and later acquired by Deluxe Corporation) specializing in business checks, forms, labels, receipt books and similar products.

Don't look for John to slow down too much. We are not sure how much he will be using that rocking chair given to him by the ORWA upon his retirement. He has lots to do on the 55 acre farm his parents bought when his Dad retired from the Navy. Drive by on the weekend and you might see him mowing or brush hogging, that is, if Carol does not have him on the road looking for secondhand stores where she can pick up bargains to sell on eBay or in her local sales booth.

The CORD Board of Directors thanks John for his 9 years of service on the Board! Have a great retirement John!

# VOTERS SHOW SUPPORT FOR LOCAL LEVIES

**Larry Long**  
**Director of Membership Development, CORD**

We heard a lot about national and statewide candidates and issues during the buildup to the November general election. It is always nice after the election when the commercials are gone, but unfortunately replaced by ads for new miracle drugs and to sell us old folks different Medicare Plans. Local governments election results on various local issues in many ways are just as important, if not more so, than national and statewide issues.

While there is some general frustration with government and government institutions, this frustration is typically directed toward national and state governments. As you have seen, statewide support for local government property tax levies and other funding support remains high. This is remarkable given the general concern with property tax increases that have occurred in some counties, especially those who have undergone a new 6-year appraisal or 3-year valuation update as required by state law.

The poster child for the approval of local property tax levies is Ohio's public libraries where voters usually show very strong support. This support continued at the recent November election when 26 of the 28 library levies on the ballot were approved. Those levies included a single bond issue, 4 new levies, 16 renewals, one renewal along with an increase, 5 replacement levies, and one replacement with an increase.

Townships across the state saw 566 township related issues on the ballot. Most of these issues were levy requests with a few questions on the enactment of township zoning and considering a switch to a township Limited Home Rule form of government. Township voters were also generally supportive of the proposals for funding from Township Trustees with an 82% approval rate. Of the 566 issues on the ballot, 467 were approved. Renewal and replacement levies fared better than new and additional levy requests with a 95% approval rate for renewals and 81% approval rate for replacement levies. New and additional levies, while not as successful as renewals and replacements, still garnered local support with 54% (62 of 113 proposals) passing. Township levies included funding for such purposes as police, fire, EMS, cemeteries, roads, parks, and senior citizen centers along with funding for current operations.



At the county level, over 75% of the property tax levy requests were for health and human services programs including alcohol and drug programs, services for the developmentally disabled, child welfare and children service programs, county homes and nursing facilities, senior citizen programs, TB programs, and other programs for the disadvantaged. The other 25% of levy requests were for funding such programs as parks, EMS, 9-1-1 phone systems, criminal justice initiatives, OSU Extension funding in the county, and for port authorities. In total, 79 requests went before county voters and 87% were approved. Of the 79 levies, 44 were for renewals, and only two of those were rejected by voters. Nine new and additional levies were proposed, with 6 of those being favorably received by voters of the counties.

Two sales tax issues went before voters in Columbiana and Gallia counties. In Columbiana, voters rejected the renewal of a 1.0% sales tax for general operating purposes, while in Gallia the proposal to continue a .25% sales tax to fund the 9-1-1 system passed. Likewise, the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) won approval on an additional .25% sales tax for expanded transit services. This will affect the residents of Franklin county and those parts of Fairfield, Union, Delaware, and Licking counties within the jurisdiction of COTA. And Cuyahoga county voters approved a "sin tax" on cigarettes for 10 years to fund arts and cultural activities.

On the other hand, school districts had a rough night on November 5th. Of the 142 property tax levies, bond issues, and school district income tax proposals that went before electors, only 71 or 50% passed. This is down from the previous year when voters nodded approval to 70% of the proposals. Of the 73 renewal requests, 51 or 71% passed. This is also reduced when compared to the usual approval rate of 90% for renewal requests. Of the 28 school districts asking for new money, only 7 were approved by school district voters, with voters in 75% of the district saying "No" to new levies.

According to the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) the property tax levy results "are a tough reminder of the challenges Ohio's schools are facing," OSBA Director of Legislative Services Jennifer Hogue said. "These results indicate that many communities are struggling to support local funding for education, likely impacted by the economic pressures felt across the state. School levies provide essential funding for academic programs, student services and school operations."





## **NEW MANDATORY TRAINING MUST BE COMPLETED BY DECEMBER 29, 2024**

You are probably sick of hearing about this...but we want to be sure that all necessary parties in your district comply with the new statewide fraud training requirements. Due to recently enacted legislation, all employees of political subdivisions must complete the training to help prevent waste, fraud, and abuse of public dollars. This requirement includes employees (including non-employee board members) of districts.

The training consists of watching an 8-minute webinar which addresses ways to prevent and/or report waste, fraud, or abuse, and then how to acquire a Certificate of Completion with the individual's name. For additional information on the training and other provisions of the new law, see the notice that was included in the Fall Edition of the CORD Report, or visit <https://ohioauditor.gov/trainings/fraud.html> to complete the training and learn more.

## **OHIO AUDITOR OF STATE KEITH FABER**

### **Fraud Reporting & Training Required**

This free training is an 8-minute video that employees can watch on-demand. Upon successful completion, a certificate will be provided. All certificates should be collected from employees and retained for audit. To receive a certificate, register first, then watch the video.

# BITS AND PIECES FROM CORD

**Larry Long**  
**Director of Membership Development, CORD**

## **Reminders of Recent Ohio EPA Rules**

Effective October 31st, the Ohio EPA adopted amended rules in Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Chapter 3745-81. This OAC Chapter deals with primary drinking water standards, including requirements for monitoring, reporting, and record keeping. Public water systems must monitor tap water for lead and copper, as well as source water at each entry point to the distribution system. The amended rules can be viewed at: [Chapter 3745-81 - Ohio Administrative Code | Ohio Laws](#). The rules that become effective on October 31st include 3745-81-10, -11, -15, and -19.

The Ohio EPA has also adopted amended rules in OAC Chapter 3745-7 which covers the certification of operators for

public water systems and wastewater treatment works. There are multiple classifications for professional operators, including public water system and treatment works operators. The amended rules became effective on November 7, 2024. The amended rules can be viewed at: [Chapter 3745-7 - Ohio Administrative Code | Ohio Laws](#).



**Environmental  
Protection  
Agency**

## **2025 Ohio Minimum Wage Increases**

Ohio's minimum wage is scheduled to increase on January 1st to \$10.70/hr. for non-tipped employees and \$5.35/hr. for tipped employees. The minimum wage applies to employees of businesses with annual gross receipts of more than \$394,000 per year. This is an increase from 2024 rates of \$10.45 and \$5.25 respectively. During 2024, Ohio's minimum wage applied to employees of businesses with annual gross receipts of more than \$385,000.

The Ohio Constitution was amended in November 2006 to provide increases every January 1st by the rate of inflation. It is tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W) for urban wage earners and clerical workers over the 12-month period prior to September. The CPI-W index increased by 2.4 % over the 12-month period from Sept. 1, 2023, to Aug. 31, 2024.

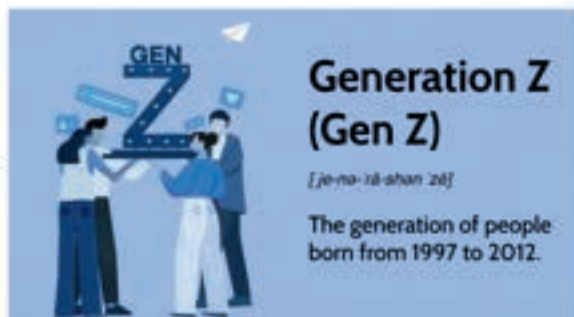
For employees at smaller companies with annual gross receipts of \$394,000 or less per year and for 14 and 15-year-olds, the state's minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. For these employees, the state wage is tied to the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, which requires federal legislative action to change. This was changed in July of 2009 when it increased from \$6.55/hr.

### Generation Z Express Concerns About Water

Generation Z—who are they anyway? This “generation” includes those born between 1997 and 2012. They are the generation following the so-called “Millennials” and before “Generation Alpha.” Generation Z are sometimes called “digital natives” because they grew up with widespread internet access. They are considered the most diverse generation in American history and are associated with social awareness, environmental consciousness, and inclusivity.

A recent study by the Walton Family Foundation and Gallup looked at Gen Z’s experiences with climate change through the lens of water. The new research reveals that 31% of Gen Z believes their generation will definitely or probably not have enough clean water in the future.

Worries about climate are present in Gen Z’s future outlooks, with the results showing that 36% percent of Gen Z worry at least somewhat that they will need to move from where they currently live due to climate change and its impacts on water.



When thinking about the future of their town or city, about three-quarters (73%) of Gen Zer’s worry about at least one type of water-related problem such as too much pollution in the water, risk of floods or not having enough access to clean drinking water. Seventy-two percent of Gen Zer’s worry about pollution of lakes, rivers, and oceans, 66% worry about the health of fish and oceans, and 58% worry about the food supply in the U.S.

The findings reveal Gen Z is more aligned than not on many of these issues regardless of political and regional backgrounds. Nine in ten (93%) of voting-age Gen Zer’s agree protecting oceans, lakes, and rivers from pollution is somewhat or very important, and majorities of both parties worry some or a great deal about water pollution, including 60% of Republicans and 89% of Democrats. Additionally, their beliefs about the availability of clean water in the future varies only slightly by census region, with those in the Northeast being most likely to say they will definitely or probably not have enough clean water (35%), and those in the Midwest being the least likely to say the same (27%).

### Ohio’s Not Alone When it Comes to Algal Blooms

While we hear a great deal in Ohio about harmful algal blooms, Ohioans are not alone in this regard. During a recent meeting in Toledo participants were told that algal blooms could be found in all 50 states. It appears that algal blooms are popping up more often these days. It’s not just the big ones seen in Lake Erie, but they are also found in small reservoirs to Lake Superior, the largest of five Great Lakes and one of the largest lakes in the world. The presence of blooms there, even though they are smaller than we see in Lake Erie, has baffled scientists because Lake Superior is much deeper and colder than Lake Erie.

### Fluoride in Drinking Water: The Debate Continues



County Commissioners in Union County, North Carolina recently voted 3-2 to stop adding fluoride to drinking water at the Yadkin River Water Treatment Plant. But the decision came after heated discussions among residents and county officials.

"My children had the blessing of growing up with fluoride in their water and ... they have very little dental issues," said Commissioner Richard Helms ahead of the vote. Another commissioner saw it differently: "Let's stop putting something in the water that's meant to treat us, and give people the freedom to choose," said David Williams.

From Oregon to Pennsylvania, hundreds of water utilities have either stopped adding fluoride to their water supplies or voted to stop its addition. Supporters of bans argue that people should be given the freedom of choice. The general access to over-the-counter dental products containing the mineral makes it no longer necessary to add to public water supplies, some say. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that while store-bought products reduce tooth decay, the greatest protection comes when they are used in combination with water fluoridation.

Juneau, Alaska, voted to remove fluoride from its drinking water in 2007. Portland, Oregon, is the largest city in the US to consistently refuse to fluoridate its drinking water. Voters have repeatedly rejected measures to add it, first in 1956 and the latest time in 2013. Despite the strong recommendation of local doctors and dentists, voters in Wichita, Kansas, have rejected adding fluoride to the water several times, most recently in 2012.

In 2016, Collier County, Florida, Commissioners opted not to remove fluoride from the water system. But they unanimously reversed that decision following a 2023 Health Freedom Bill of Rights county ordinance in response to Covid-19 "to safeguard the healthcare rights and freedoms of Collier County residents."

Fluoride opponents claim the mineral is responsible for everything from acne to high blood pressure and thyroid dysfunction to bone cancer. With Robert F. Kennedy, Jr becoming the new Director of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, might this become a more intense area of public debate.





## SPOTLIGHT ON CORD'S ASSOCIATE MEMBERS 2024



*CORD's Associate Membership Program is an important membership category to help CORD provide needed legislative representation in the Ohio General Assembly and before state agencies; to provide legislative/information alerts and the CORD newsletter; and, to provide other member services, including monitoring litigation that may set precedents that can impact Districts. We are grateful to the following for their loyal support, assistance, and participation.*

*CORD members are encouraged to express appreciation to our Associate Members who help support the organization.*



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*Thank You*  
**TO OUR MEMBERS!**



# Happy Holidays



*From*



Thanks to all CORD members and supporters for a great 2024! A special thanks to the 2024 CORD Board Members.

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