



# Ohio Township Association Legislative Alert May 8, 2020

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## Legislative Action This Week

### **OTA Testifies on Township Omnibus Bill**

[HB 444](#), the township omnibus bill, had a second hearing in the House State and Local Government Committee this week. The OTA provided proponent [testimony](#) on the bill along with Christine Maticic (Liberty Township, Butler County; [testimony](#)), Larry Burks (West Chester Township, Butler County; [testimony](#)), and Paul Webb (firefighter/EMT with Pitchin Fire Department; [testimony](#)).

You can watch the committee hearing [here](#).

### **Senate Passes SB 310, Outlines CARES Act Revenue Distribution**

The Ohio Senate passed [SB 310](#), which provides a formula for distribution of federal CARES Act funding to local governments, including townships. The bill distributes \$350 million to local governments via the Local Government Fund formula. For additional details on the bill and associated funding, click [here](#).

SB 310 will now go to the House for consideration. The OTA encourages you to thank your senator for supporting this bill and reach out to your representative to convey your support for SB 310. You may view the OTA's joint letter of support for this initial distribution [here](#).

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## Bills in Committee Next Week

### **House Criminal Justice Committee - Thursday, May 14th at 11:00am**

[SB 10 THEFT IN OFFICE](#) (WILSON) - To expand the penalties for theft in office based on the amount stolen and to include as restitution audit costs of the entity that suffered the loss.

*4th hearing - all testimony, possible amendments; OTA position - support*

[HB 539 TOWNSHIP POLICE](#) (GHANBARI, BLAIR) - To permit a township police officer who serves a population between 5,000 and 50,000 to enforce specified traffic offenses on certain interstate highways if authorized by that township's board of trustees.

*1st hearing - sponsor testimony; OTA position - support*

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## Cemetery Responsible Restart Guidance

In response to the [Stay Safe Ohio Order](#), the Department of Commerce has issued the following guidance for cemeteries:

Essential business and operations, along with businesses restarting minimum basic operations, must continue to be proactive in ensuring social distancing requirements. The Order lays out the following steps to be taken by businesses where possible:

1. Designate six-foot distances for employees and customers;

2. Make hand sanitizer and sanitizing products readily available for employees and customers;
3. Implement separate operating hours for elderly and vulnerable customers; and
4. Offer online and remote access of facility hours and operations and inform customers on how best to reach the business.

The Department has also received questions concerning Memorial Day parades and celebrations. The Stay Safe at Home order specified certain businesses and operations that are to remain closed at this time. The full list can be found [here](#), and as you will see, parades are specifically listed. While the Stay Safe at Home Order is currently set to expire on May 29, 2020, what the future holds for Ohio in the coming weeks and months depends much upon Ohioans' continued compliance with the Reopen Ohio Plan. The Department strongly recommends conferring with both your legal counsel and local health officials.

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## NATaT to Salute "Hometown Heroes"

The National Association of Towns and Townships is joining other prominent organizations in supporting a new, national program to honor extraordinary public service volunteers throughout the country. The program is called the Small Town America Civic Volunteer Award (STACVA).

STACVA is intended to spotlight a growing crisis facing thousands of smaller townships, cities, and rural counties: the decline in the availability of citizens to serve in critical public safety and service roles, including volunteer firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and on local government boards and commissions. **The program, which will launch on June 1st, is open to localities of 5,000 people or less. Nominations must be submitted no later than August 15th using an online application form ([www.civic-volunteer.com](http://www.civic-volunteer.com)).**

**Localities represented by the top three winning honorees will receive cash grants of \$10,000, \$7,500, and \$5,000. Local governments represented by the top 100 STACVA nominees will receive custom CivicPlus websites (and one year of website hosting) at no charge.** The program has an estimated total value of over one million dollars in donated services and cash awards.

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## Federal Update

### *Congressional Action*

The Senate was in session this week, while the House was still in recess due to concerns about returning to the Capitol. Senators and their offices have been advised to follow health guidelines from the Office of the Attending Physician. The guidelines encourage, but do not require, masks and suggest spreading workers out and changing office layouts to allow for distancing, along with other guidelines.

Senators are returning to Washington as lawmakers remain far apart on a deal on a potential fifth coronavirus relief bill, with several high-ranking GOP senators signaling that they do not expect a quick agreement as they work to fine tune the implementation of the CARES Act. Leader McConnell (R-KY) and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) are demanding that the next bill include greater liability protections for employers, as businesses pressure Congress to pass new language over concerns that they could be sued as they start to reopen. McConnell has warned that it is his "red line" and that the Senate will not pass a bill without it, even as the idea has received a lukewarm reception from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY). President Trump also said on Sunday that he would not support a fifth COVID-19 relief bill unless it includes a payroll tax cut, a measure that has muted support among lawmakers in Congress.

Meanwhile, Democrats are calling for significant aid for state and local governments that have been hit hard by the virus as their top priority for the next bill, with Speaker Pelosi floating that they could need roughly \$1 trillion. However, some GOP senators are wary about providing more help to state and local governments beyond the \$150 billion passed as part of the CARES Act's Coronavirus Relief Fund. The caucus is still divided over whether to give states and localities more flexibility on how they are able to use the money already passed by Congress, including if they should allow it to be used for revenue replacement.



NATaT has created a [Coronavirus Guidance webpage](#) to store NATaT letters, memos and briefs on the outbreak, as well as critical information and guidance released by Congress and the Administration.

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## 2020 Census



### **All Your Information for the Upcoming 2020 Census**

The U.S. Census Bureau continues to carefully monitor the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation and follow the guidance of federal, state and local health authorities. We are adjusting some operations as outlined below with two key principles in mind: protecting the health and safety of our staff and the public and fulfilling our statutory requirement to deliver the 2020 Census counts to the President on schedule.

Currently, the planned completion date for data collection for the 2020 Census is July 31, 2020, but that date can and will be adjusted if necessary as the situation dictates in order to achieve a complete and accurate count.

**It has never been easier to respond on your own, whether online, over the phone or by mail - all without having to meet a census taker.**

**Learn more about these updates and ways to be counted [here](#).**

[US Census Website](#)

[Ohio Census Website](#)

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