
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

City health districts

- Requires each city with a population less than 50,000 served by a board of health of a city health district to complete a study evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of merging with the general health district that includes the city for the administration of health affairs in the merged general health district.
- Requires the Director of Health, in consultation with the Auditor of State, to develop criteria to be used in determining whether a merger is advisable and requires the city to conduct its evaluation using the developed criteria.
- Requires the city's chief executive, if the study indicates that a merger is advisable, to enter into a contract with the District Advisory Council for the general health district that includes the city for the administration of health affairs in the merged general health district, unless the applicable Advisory Council delays the merger for good cause.

Soil and water conservation districts

- Establishes procedures by which a soil and water conservation district may accept credit cards for payment of certain goods and services.
- Authorizes a soil and water conservation district to use an "employee dishonesty and faithful performance of duty policy" in lieu of surety bonds for all officers, employees, and appointees who are required by law to give a bond.

Regional councils of governments

- Authorizes a regional council of governments, having an educational service center as its fiscal agent and established to provide health care benefits, to acquire, establish, manage, or operate a separate business entity, and utilize its unencumbered reserve funds for the acquisition, establishment, or operation, to cover costs of those benefits.

Agreements with animal shelters

- Allows a board of county commissioners to enter into a written agreement with an animal shelter to operate as a dog pound on behalf of the county under certain circumstances.

Shoreline improvement district project expansion

- Allows a special improvement district to fund projects, including by assessing property within the district, to abate erosion along waters within a watershed district.

Attorney fees and costs in inverse condemnation proceedings

- Requires courts in inverse condemnation proceedings to award amounts sufficient to reimburse a property owner for reasonable expenses in the proceeding if the property owner is successful in the proceeding or reaches a settlement.

Use of eminent domain to provide recreational trails

- Prohibits park districts in counties with 220,000 to 240,000 residents from using eminent domain to appropriate property for recreational trails.
- Sets an expiration date of July 1, 2026, for the prohibition.

Free library photocopies of identification

- Requires public libraries to provide an individual with a photocopy of that individual's driver's license, driver's permit, or state identification free of charge if the individual requests one.

City health districts

(R.C. 3709.012, 3709.052, 3709.06, and 3709.07)

The bill directs each city with a population less than 50,000 that is represented by a board of health of a city health district to complete a study examining the efficiency and effectiveness of the city health district merging with the county's general health district. The study must be completed within 18 months after the official announcement of the result of a federal decennial census, including the 2020 census. As part of the study, the city must compare the merger's efficiency and effectiveness with that of remaining as a separate health district.

The Director of Health, in consultation with the Auditor of State, must develop criteria to be used by a city in determining whether a merger with the general health district is advisable. The criteria may include accreditation standards promulgated by the Public Health Accreditation Board, a nonprofit organization that assists local public health entities in obtaining accreditation. The Director also must provide technical and financial assistance to cities and oversee any efficiency and effectiveness study conducted.

Should a study indicate that a merger would be efficient and effective, the bill directs the city's chief executive to enter into a contract with the District Advisory Council for the general health district for the administration of health affairs in the former city health district and the merged general health district. If a merger is required by the bill, it must be completed not later than 30 months after the result of a federal decennial census is announced, unless either of the following acts for good cause to delay implementation of the merger:

1. In a single-county general health district, the district's District Advisory Council; or
2. In a multi-county general health district resulting from a union of general health districts, the District Advisory Council representing the county having a majority of the population to be served by the merged district.

Soil and water conservation districts

(R.C. 3.061, 940.05, and 940.111)

Acceptance of credit cards by districts

The bill allows a board of supervisors of a soil and water conservation district to adopt a resolution allowing payments to be made to the district by financial transaction device. It also establishes procedures for their use.

A financial transaction device includes:

1. A credit card, debit card, charge card, or prepaid or stored value card; and
2. An automated clearinghouse network credit, debit, or e-check entry that includes accounts receivable and internet-initiated, point of purchase, and telephone-initiated applications or any other device or method for making an electronic payment or transfer of funds.

Dishonesty and faithful performance of duty policy

The bill authorizes a soil and water conservation district to adopt an “employee dishonesty and faithful performance of duty policy” in lieu of requiring surety bonds for all officers and employees who are entrusted with district funds.

Current law already authorizes certain political subdivisions (e.g., counties, townships, and municipal corporations) to use these policies in lieu of surety bonds. An employee dishonesty and faithful performance of duty policy is a policy of insurance to protect against losses that would otherwise be protected against under a surety bond.

Regional councils of governments

(R.C. 167.03)

The bill authorizes a regional council of governments, having an educational service center as its fiscal agent and that is established to provide health care benefits, to acquire, establish, manage, or operate a separate business entity, and use its unencumbered reserve funds for that acquisition, establishment, or operation, to cover potential costs of health care benefits. The unencumbered reserve funds can only be used for the above purposes to the extent approved by the council’s governing board and so long as the council remains sufficiently reserved, in the exercise of sound and prudent actuarial judgment, to cover the potential cost of health care benefits for the council’s members’ officers, employees, and their dependents.

Under continuing law, the governing bodies of any two or more counties, municipal corporations, townships, special districts, school districts, or other political subdivisions may enter into an agreement with each other, or of another state to the extent permissible by the other state, to establish a regional council of governments.

Agreements with animal shelters

(R.C. 955.15)

The bill allows a board of county commissioners to enter into a written agreement with an animal shelter to operate as a dog pound on behalf of the county, provided both of the following apply to the animal shelter:

1. It is suitable to operate as a dog pound; and
2. It maintains devices for humanely destroying dogs.

Current law requires the county to either furnish its own dog pound or deliver seized dogs to an animal shelter maintained by the county humane society. The bill retains the county's ability to take both of those actions.

Shoreline improvement district project expansion

(R.C. 1710.01)

The bill allows a special improvement district to fund shoreline improvement projects to abate erosion along water resources within a *watershed district*. The special improvement district may assess property within the district to fund the project. Watershed districts do not have independent authority to assess property for district projects.

Under current law, a special improvement district may fund shoreline improvement projects to abate erosion along the Lake Erie shoreline only.

Inverse condemnation proceedings

(R.C. 163.62; Section 701.50)

The bill requires courts in inverse condemnation proceedings to award property owners, who are successful or reach settlements in the proceedings, funds sufficient to reimburse the owners for reasonable expenses incurred in the proceedings. An inverse condemnation proceeding is a lawsuit brought by a property owner alleging the government took the property owner's property without initiating formal proceedings to do so.¹⁰⁹ In the bill, the General Assembly finds the enactment of the above provisions to be remedial in nature.

Use of eminent domain to provide recreational trails

(Section 715.05)

The bill prohibits park districts created under state law and located in counties with 220,000 to 240,000 residents from using eminent domain to appropriate property for recreational trails. A "**recreational trail**" is a public trail used for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, ski touring, canoeing, or other nonmotorized forms of recreational travel. This prohibition expires on July 1, 2026.

¹⁰⁹ *Black's Law Dictionary*, 11th Edition.

Free library photocopies of identification

(R.C. 3375.011)

The bill requires public libraries to provide an individual with a photocopy of that individual's driver's license, driver's permit, or state identification free of charge if the individual requests one. Public libraries include the State Library of Ohio and free county, municipal, school district, public and regional libraries.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ R.C. 3375.404, not in the bill.