



OHIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



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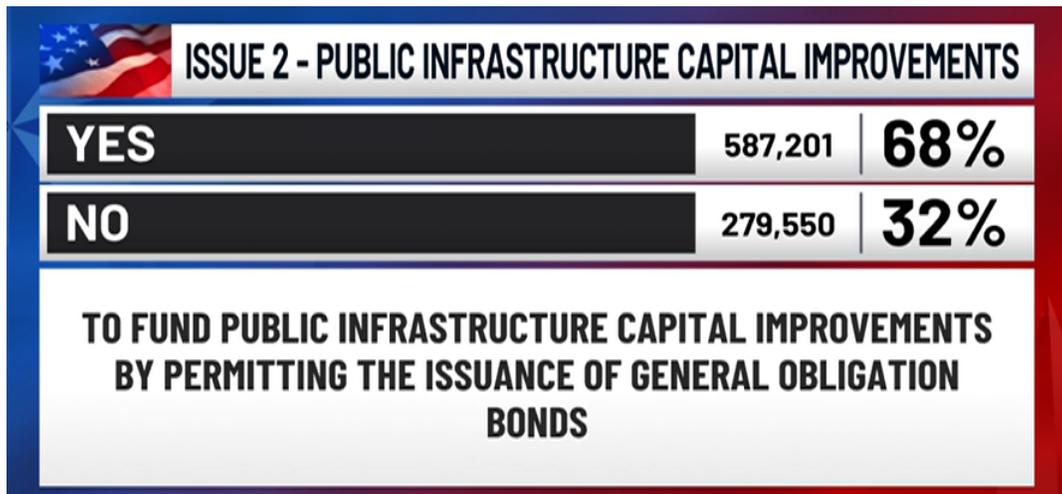
FIFTH THIRD BANK



Nationwide



Voters Approve Issue 2!



The Ohio Chamber of Commerce endorsed Issue 2, and on Tuesday, May 6, it passed with nearly 68% of the vote.

Approval of Issue 2 continues the State Capital Improvement Program (SCIP), which provides funds through bonds to communities in all 88 counties for repairs and improvements of roads, bridges, wastewater treatment systems, water supply systems, storm water and sanitary collection. The recent passage of Issue 2 allows up to \$2.5 billion in bond issue over 10 years (\$250 million a year) for these types of essential infrastructure projects.

Chamber Endorses Proposal to Create Ohio-Israel Trade and Innovation Partnership

The
Ohio



Chamber testified last week in support of House Bill 188, which creates the Ohio-Israel Trade and Innovation Partnership. This endeavor would advance trade, investment, policy issues, business and academic exchanges, economic support, infrastructure, industry, and other issues as determined by the Partnership, as well as multilateral partnerships between Ohio, Israel, and other nations. The Partnership would be made up of 17 members, with six members of the General Assembly with certain knowledge or interest in Israeli affairs, eight members appointed by the Governor (including a dedicated seat for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce), and three ex officio members in the Chancellor of Higher Education, Director of Development, and Lieutenant Governor.

As Chamber SVP Rick Carfagna testified, Ohio and Israel have long collaborated through numerous partnerships to exchange ideas and learn from each other, particularly in the fields of academic collaboration, technology, manufacturing, agriculture, and clean water. According to the Ohio Department of Development's *Ohio Export Report*, Ohio exported nearly \$242 million worth of manufacturing goods to Israel in 2023. Furthermore, the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise reports that since 1996, Ohio's exports to Israel have totaled more than \$6 billion, and Israel now ranks as Ohio's 26th leading trade partner. Ohio also ranks 12th among all states in exports to Israel.

On a national scale, Israel is the United States' 27th largest trading partner. U.S. goods exports to Israel in 2024 were \$14.8 billion (up \$813.7 million from 2023),

with U.S. goods imports from Israel totaling \$22.2 billion (up \$1.4 billion from 2023). As the only country with free trade agreements with both the United States and the European community, Israel is also capable of serving as a bridge for international trade between the United States and Europe.

The Ohio Chamber appreciates the efforts of Representatives Thomas Hall (R-Madison Twp.) and Eric Synenberg (D-Beachwood) to craft this partnership, thereby uniting Ohio's elected officials, higher education institutions, the statewide business community, and Ohio's Jewish communities to foster new levels of innovation and economic opportunities between Israel and the Buckeye State.

Ohio House Passes Chamber Priority Legislation

During their Wednesday session, the Ohio House passed House Bill 126 after the bill cleared the House Judiciary Committee earlier that same day. House Bill 126 is a top ten priority bill of the Ohio Chamber because it brings much-needed certainty around when a plaintiff may pursue public nuisance lawsuits. This legislation codifies and reinforces the Ohio Supreme Court's holding in the recent national opioid litigation that found Ohio's product liability laws preclude parties from pursuing product-based public nuisance actions. Product-based public nuisance actions are problematic for a strong Ohio business and legal climate because plaintiffs do not need to prove the actions of a business caused the alleged harm; they only need to show an interference of a public right. This lower standard makes it nearly impossible for businesses to determine their potential legal risks while also making it easier for courts to find a business liable.

House Bill 126 addresses this issue while building upon prior legislative enactments and judicial decisions by prohibiting any person or political subdivision from bringing product-based public nuisance lawsuits. This new statutory prohibition brings greater stability to our state's legal climate by directing all product-based lawsuits to Ohio's product liability laws that include statutory damages rather than enabling parties to pursue more unpredictable public nuisance claims.

The legislation will also finally end a game of legislative "whack-a-mole" that has gone on for two decades. In this game, the legislature would respond to a city bringing a product-based public nuisance claim by revising Ohio's product liability law to reinforce that public nuisance claims are not appropriate when the alleged damages arise from the use of a product. However, these attempts

proved futile because cities and other political subdivisions have continued to bring these public nuisance lawsuits. House Bill 126 will end this practice since it statutorily prohibits any person – including political subdivisions – from bringing any product-based public nuisance claim.

The Ohio Chamber commends Representatives Adam Mathews and Meredith Craig for sponsoring this legislation and Speaker Matt Huffman for bringing this important legislation to the House floor. We look forward to continuing our advocacy as the bill now moves to the Ohio Senate.