From Advocacy to Opportunity: Advancing Ohio's Aging Services Under New State Leadership

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Area Agencies on Aging



Ohio's 12 Area Agencies on Aging are mission-driven, primarily not-for-profit, organizations that operate a complex service delivery system with federal, state, local and private funding that successfully develops, coordinates and administers aging services.

From Uncertainty to Opportunity

- Ohio is approaching a consequential political transition that will reshape priorities for the next administration and General Assembly.

- Budget pressures could affect Medicaid, home and community-based services (HCBS), and the broader aging and disability service network.

- The aging network must be prepared to explain why investments in aging services matter to Ohioans, families, communities, and the state budget.

- Advocacy is an ongoing responsibility, not just an activity during budget season

Menti Poll

www.menti.com

What is your biggest advocacy concern heading into the next state administration and budget cycle?

THE 2026 ELECTION AND 137TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Presented by: Kyle Miller
Firm: Pappas & Associates
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KEY STATEWIDE RACES

United States Senate



Senator
Jon Husted (R)



Former Senator
Sherrod Brown (D)

Polling
RCP Average: Brown +3.3%
2018 Senate Race: Brown led by 6-18% in October polls. Wins by 6.4%

Governor



Vivek Ramaswamy (R)



Amy Acton (D)

Polling:
RCP Average: Acton 3.5%
2018 Governor Race: Cordray leads by 3-6% in the polls. DeWine wins by 4.3%

OTHER STATEWIDE RACES

Secretary of State



Robert Sprague (R)



Allison Russo (D)

Attorney General



Keith Faber (R)



John Kulewicz (D)

Treasurer



Jay Edwards (R)



Seth Walsh (D)

Auditor



Frank LaRose (R)



Annette Blackwell (D)

THE OHIO LEGISLATURE

136th General Assembly Balance of Power

Senate: 24 Republicans, 9 Democrats
House: 65 Republicans, 34 Democrats

Senate Majority: 17 out of 33 Seats
Senate Super Majority: 20 out of 33 Seats
House Majority: 50 out of 99 Seats
House Super Majority: 60 out of 99

10 Key Races

Senate District 13: Gayle Manning vs. Joe Miller

Senate District 27: Steve Demetriou vs. Mike Roberto

House District 17: Mike Dovilla vs. Megan Coy

House District 31: Mike Kahoe vs. Noah Spinner

House District 35: Vik Sandu vs. Samantha Salamon

House District 36: Andrea White v. Rose Lounsbury

House District 39: Mark Campbell vs. Daquan Neal

House District 49: Jim Thomas vs. Krista Allison

House District 52: Cliff Winkel vs. Mike Baker

House District 60: Brian Lorenz vs. Shelby Kimball

3 POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Outcome 1: Republicans Hold the Fort

Ohio Senate: Husted Wins

Governor's Race: Ramaswamy Wins

Other Statewide Races: All Republicans win

Senate: No net gains. Balance stays 24-9, Republican

House: Democrats net 1-2 seats (Likely Districts 31 and 35). Republicans keep supermajority with 63-64

Probability: 30%

What This Means

A "normal" lame duck session

High turnover in the Executive branch

- New Ramaswamy Team
- Return of some Kasich admin officials

2028-29 Budget Process dominated by Republicans

A legislative dynamic similar to that of the 136th General Assembly

Biggest unknown will be Ramaswamy administration relationship with the legislature

3 Possible Outcomes

Outcome 2: Democrats Make in Roads

Ohio Senate: Brown Wins

Governor's Race: Ramaswamy Wins

Other Statewide Races: All Republicans win

Senate: Democrats net 1 seat (likely District 13). New balance becomes 23-10, Republican

House: Democrats net 3-5 seats (Likely Districts 31, 35, 36, 39, and 52). Republicans keep supermajority with 60-62 House Seats

Probability: 50%

What This Means

The 2028 Senate Race Starts November 4th

A "normal" lame duck session

High turnover in the Executive branch

- New Vivek team
- Return of some Kasich admin officials

2028-29 Budget Process dominated by Republicans

Each Republican member has substantial leverage in emergency clause measures

Biggest unknown will be how unified the House Republican Caucus stays on emergency clause votes

3 Possible Outcomes

Outcome 3: Democrats Storm the Castle

Ohio Senate: Brown Wins

Governor's Race: Acton Wins

Other Statewide Races: Democrats win State and AG offices. Maybe others.

Senate: Democrats net 2 seats. Balance 22-11, Republican.

House: Democrats net 6-8 seats. Republicans lose the supermajority and retain between 57-59 seats.

Probability: 20%

What This Means

The 2028 Senate Race Starts November 4th

Republicans try to "nail things to the floor" in a busy lame duck session

Moderate turnover in the Executive branch

- New Acton team
- Some DeWine hold overs possible

Democrats have veto power over legislation

2028-29 Budget Process will set the tone for the next four years.

Biggest unknown is whether an Acton administration and Republican legislature can manage a working relationship or if things gridlock immediately.

Roles in the Budget Process

Governor

Submit "Blue Book" usually in February

Participate in Conference Committee

Sign the Budget into law by June 30th.

Note: Has line-item veto

House

Pass first version of the budget

Each committee reviews a part of the budget (ie, Medicaid Committee reviews Medicaid Budget)

Ideally pass by April 30th

Participate in Conference Committee

Senate

Amend or pass House version (they always amend)

Participate in Conference Committee

Pass by June 30th.

Fiscal Pressures in 2028-2029 Budget Process

Federal Medicaid Cuts from OBBBA

$700 million of surplus used on 90-day gas tax relief (October 1-December 31, 2026)

Continued political pressure for property tax relief

Potential GRF support requested from self funded state agencies

Potential cuts to income tax (especially in a Ramaswamy administration)

Advocacy for 2028-29 Budget

November- December

Reach out to newly elected legislators and Governor-Elect staff and request a phone call or in-person meeting before they take office.

*Send a note to the defeated candidate if you met them during the cycle.

January-April

Focus advocacy on the Governor's staff and House of Representatives

Hold policy roundtables- invite Representatives, Senators and Governor's staff

Apirl-June

Focus on Senate and Governor's Staff

Statehouse Days

QUESTIONS?

For questions on election night text Kyle at (614) 735-6604 (I will be up late!)

Value of Aging Services and HCBS

- The value of the aging network: Ohio's 12 Area Agencies on Aging connect older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and community partners to services that help people remain safe, independent, and connected.

- The broader opportunity: Aging policy supports families, workforce participation, rural communities, healthcare systems, and Ohio's ability to meet the needs of a growing older population.

Value of Aging Services and HCBS

- **The value of HCBS: Community-based services support people who want to remain at home, assist family caregivers, and may help avoid or delay more costly institutional care when appropriate.**
  - **On a typical day, Ohio serves 36,000 older people in nursing homes who are supported by the Medicaid program, while Medicaid supports 56,450 older people at home or in an assisted living residence.**
  - **According to HPIO, Ohio Medicaid spends $12,000 less per enrollee for in-home care compared to institutional care.**

- **The infrastructure behind services: Assessments, care coordination, provider networks, information and referral, and local partnerships are essential to access and continuity.**

Value of Aging Services and HCBS

- **The cost of underinvestment: Funding reductions can affect staffing, timely assessments, access to services, provider capacity, and oversight—not simply administrative budgets.**

- **The case for sustainable funding: Funding structures should reflect service demand, operating costs, and the infrastructure required to deliver quality services.**

o4a FY 2028-2029 State Budget Policy Priorities

- **Protect Local Care Coordination: Ensure the AAA's Essential Role in Next Generation MyCare Ohio**
  - **AAAs provide an independent, locally embedded layer of coordination, continuity, and accountability that helps the system function effectively across regions and populations.**
- **Ask: Retain and reinforce the existing state budget language establishing the AAAs' mandated role in Next Generation MyCare Ohio**

o4a FY 2028-2029 State Budget Policy Priorities

- **Help More Older Adults Stay at Home: Modernize PASSPORT Agency Funding Through a Sustainable Structure**
  - **Ensure sustainable PASSPORT agency funding to meet the needs of Ohio's growing older adult population and preserve the local infrastructure necessary to deliver Medicaid home- and community-based services.**
- **Ask: Establish a single dedicated Medicaid appropriation line item (ALI) for AAAs to administer PASSPORT and the Assisted Living Waiver, including case management, Front Door access, Medicaid outreach, provider oversight and related program operations to promote transparency and allow for effective and efficient administration.**

o4a FY 2028-2029 State Budget Policy Priorities

- **Make it Easier to Find Help: Strengthen Ohio's Aging & Disability Network – "The Front Door to Aging Services"**
  - Ohio's AAAs collectively respond to over 360,000 requests annually, serving as a trusted first point of contact for individuals, caregivers, hospitals, providers, and community organizations. The AAAs' Front Door staff ensures older adults and their families speak to real people who have the skills and knowledge to navigate real options for what to do next, and to make connections happen.

- Ask: Establish a dedicated state-funded line item to support AAA screening, navigation, coordination, connection, and the infrastructure needed to operate Ohio's "Front Door to Aging Services."

Inside the Statehouse: Engaging Policymakers

Representative Bride Rose Sweeney

Advocacy Worksheet

- Identify priority issue and the specific action you want policymakers to take.
- Identify three policymakers with whom you should build or strengthen relationships.
- Identify at least one local data point or consumer story that supports your case.
- Schedule one meeting, site visit, or follow-up action to complete within 30 days.
- How can your organization coordinate your message with o4a or other aging network organizations?



Final Thoughts

- Prepare early. Build relationships before budget decisions and policy proposals are finalized.
- Speak with a coordinated voice. Local examples are most powerful when they reinforce a clear statewide case for aging services.
- Make advocacy part of the work. Every interaction with a policymaker or community partner can help build understanding and support.
- Be ready to adapt. Maintain consistent priorities while adjusting messages and strategies as the new administration's agenda and fiscal outlook become clearer.







Thank you!

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