

PROTECTING ★ THE ★ UNPROTECTED



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OHIO ATTORNEY
GENERAL'S OFFICE
HIGHLIGHTS

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DAVE YOST
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



MISSION STATEMENT

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE PROTECTS OHIO
AND ITS FAMILIES.



OUR ACTIONS ARE DRIVEN BY THEIR INTERESTS,
GUIDED BY THE RULE OF LAW
AND THE RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF JUSTICE.



WE WORK TO CONSTRAIN EVIL AND
EMPOWER GOOD, WITHOUT PARTISAN PREFERENCE
OR SUBJECTIVE JUDGMENT, AS DEFINED
BY THE LAW AND BY THE CONSTITUTIONS OF
THE UNITED STATES AND OHIO.

LETTER FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

My Fellow Ohioans,

Count 2020 as a year of notable accomplishments despite the pandemic. My team adapted quickly to the statewide COVID-19 restrictions, setting up home offices to continue our mission, uninterrupted, of serving the people of this great state.

Working together with Republican and Democratic legislators, we passed important legislation in the fight against human trafficking. The bill included measures to separate the existing "soliciting" violation, creating a new provision with enhanced penalties for the buyers of sex, and to eliminate an arbitrary distinction between juvenile trafficking victims who are younger than 16 and those who are 16 and 17.

At the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, our scientists partnered with a private nonprofit, Battelle Memorial Institute, to pioneer a new method to test DNA. Massively parallel sequencing of mitochondrial DNA can provide answers in cases where other forms of DNA analysis can't. The technique was used twice last year to give names to unidentified bodies and closure to the grieving families.

My office also trained 1,700 law enforcement officers on how to form threat assessment teams with school leaders and social workers, a proven method for preventing violence. We established a system that brings together hospitals, law enforcement and crime labs to keep victims of sexual assault informed about the status of their evidence kits. And we forced politicians charged with corruption to leave office.

These are just a few of the initiatives and successes outlined in this report, work that my office accomplished to protect the unprotected and achieve Big Good for Ohioans.

We will continue to pursue these missions in the year ahead, no matter what hardships arise.

Yours,

Dave Yost
Ohio Attorney General



A year of challenges & innovations

The second year of Attorney General Dave Yost’s administration was a year unlike any other in our lifetime.

Amid the turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and a contentious presidential election, the Attorney General’s Office (AGO) forged ahead with its critical mission of protecting and serving Ohioans. Yost stood up for what is right, confronted societal problems and public corruption, and implemented innovations — further enhancing his office’s effectiveness.

2020 INNOVATIONS

- ★ The Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) established a Cold Case Unit to prioritize unsolved murders and sexual assaults.
- ★ BCI perfected a new DNA testing method – massively parallel sequencing of mitochondrial DNA – that provides an important option when more traditional testing fails.
- ★ The Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy overhauled its methods to make it easier for law enforcement officers to secure advanced and more relevant training.
- ★ Ohio School Threat Assessment Training was created, uniting schools, law enforcement and mental-health experts in an effort to help troubled students before they turn to violence.
- ★ The Crime Victims Services Section rolled out the Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System to keep victims informed about the status of the evidence in their case.
- ★ The Consumer Protection Section launched the Robocall Enforcement Unit to fight scammers.



THE OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL’S OFFICE

- ★ The attorney general is the chief law officer for the state of Ohio.
- ★ The office has a proud history stretching back to 1846.
- ★ Throughout Ohio, about 1,465 employees work in nine locations.
- ★ The office consists of roughly 30 “sections.” Based on number of employees, the largest are the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), Collections Enforcement and Health Care Fraud. See more details about the sections on Pages 24-26.
- ★ Every month, 150,000-286,000 people visit www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov to find Webcheck locations, check the database of missing Ohioans, pay debts owed to the state, etc.



SIDE NOTE

2020 internal innovations

The Attorney General’s Office:

- ★ Initiated IT security upgrades to eliminate deficiencies and boost WiFi, decreasing risks to the sensitive information housed on AGO networks.
- ★ Implemented a work-from-home policy to protect the health of staff members, requiring critical adjustments from the IT department. One result will be the physical consolidation of the AGO’s Columbus offices into a single location, which will save significant money on downtown rent.
- ★ Established a mentoring program to help train new lawyers and increase staff retention.
- ★ After deliberate consideration, realigned the structure of the executive staff to further enhance the AGO’s long history of strong performance in protecting and serving the people of Ohio.



Attorney General Dave Yost gathered with those involved in creating the Ohio School Threat Assessment Training program early in 2020 at a press conference in the Ohio Statehouse.

‘Children’s safety depends on us’

One of the questions that inevitably arises after a school shooting is: When the shooter clearly showed signs of trouble, why wasn’t the tragedy prevented?

“The safety of children across our state depends on us plugging that gap,” Attorney General Yost says.

To that end, Yost created Ohio School Threat Assessment Training, a program combining best practices from leading safety experts, including the U.S. Secret Service. The program, which came online in February 2020, guides schools, law enforcement and mental-health experts on how to join forces to get help for troubled students before those students turn to violence.

The training has two stages: In the first, 11 videos share how to form multidisciplinary school-based threat assessment teams. About 1,700 law enforcement officers completed the training.

In the second stage, the teams come together and law enforcement officers complete school building vulnerability assessments. Almost 500 such assessments have been conducted.

See the training: www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/ThreatAssessment.

In December 2020, Ohio passed a law requiring schools that serve grades 6-12 to have such threat assessment teams.

OPOTA OVERHAUL

When he took office, Yost started surveying law enforcement to better understand what they want from the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA). He learned that agencies prefer training close to home taught by experts in their fields, instead of full-time instructors.

The input became crucial as two factors converged: (1.) Attendance in some classes had fallen to just five students, and (2.) COVID-19 sucked the business out of Ohio’s casinos, which provided a big chunk of OPOTA’s funding.

So Yost ordered changes. Today, OPOTA has evolved into a leaner operation that emphasizes:

- ★ Teaching subjects for which law enforcement agencies say they most need training.
- ★ Presenting classes that can be accessed throughout Ohio, not just at OPOTA’s London campus.
- ★ Partnering with teachers who are active experts in their fields.



Dwight Holcomb, who became OPOTA Director in January 2020, is committed to providing excellent service.

CONCEALED-HANDGUN SAFEGUARD

In a special examination of Ohio’s concealed-carry system, the attorney general discovered that an important disqualification could fall through the cracks between government agencies.

When courts declare Ohioans mentally incompetent, they notify the Attorney General’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Thus, background checks can find the disqualification and prevent the person from obtaining a license.

But if a person who already had a license was ruled incompetent, there was no process to trigger a revocation, as state law mandates. The reason: The Ohio Department of Public Safety maintains the list of concealed-carry license holders, and BCI had no access.

To solve the problem, the attorney general forged an agreement with ODPS that results in regular cross-checks. County sheriffs are now notified when action is required — and Ohio is safer for it.



OPOTA continues to provide its nationally respected driving instruction in London.

‘A bedrock principle of fair investigations’

When officer-involved critical incidents happen, police agencies should not investigate their own. It casts doubt on any findings and fosters distrust in the community.

“Independence is a bedrock principle of fair investigations,” AG Yost says.

BCI offers expert, independent investigations of officer-involved shootings and signed agreements with law enforcement agencies throughout Ohio in 2020 to investigate when such critical incidents take place. This gets BCI on the scene immediately, and it gives communities confidence that the investigation is fair because it is conducted by outsiders.

The issue is so important that at the new OPOTA, one of the first courses offered was “BCI Lethal Use of Force and Officer Involved Shooting Investigations.” The class is open only to police officers, but because public interest is intense, Yost’s team created a half-hour video

summarizing the content. (Find it at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/PoliceIssues.)

“All of us can better understand independent investigations of police when we’re given a firsthand description,” Yost said.

In further efforts to build trust and ensure that Ohio’s officers are better trained, equipped and prepared to meet the needs of our communities, the attorney general spent time talking with law enforcement and inviting input from the public. Those insights informed proposals he and Gov. Mike DeWine brought to the state legislature.

REFORM PROPOSALS

- ★ Mandate third-party investigations, such as by BCI, of officer-involved critical incidents.
- ★ Build accountability by establishing a licensing board at OPOTA. The board would set a code of conduct and ensure that officers adhere to it or risk their license.
- ★ Help ensure that only those with the appropriate temperament become police officers by instituting a psychological exam and character checks during basic training.
- ★ Ban chokeholds, except when an officer’s life is in danger.
- ★ Create a regular funding stream to pay for advanced training for law enforcement officers so that officers learn the most modern policing and de-escalation methods.
- ★ Fund body cameras and data storage to equip more agencies across Ohio.



SIDE NOTE

A bipartisan group of prosecutors from Ohio’s three biggest counties joined AG Yost in proposing common-sense reforms of the state’s no-knock warrant laws. They called for Ohio’s law to be adjusted so that such warrants are granted only when there is a substantial risk to the lives of officers, only in felony cases and only if officers are clearly labeled and wearing body cameras.



‘Corruption has no place in government’

When officials — whether elected or hired to represent authority — put personal gain ahead of duty, they cannot be trusted to act for the good of the public and should no longer hold office. Attorney General Yost firmly believes that Ohioans deserve government that is free of corruption at every level.

This belief proved especially germane in 2020, as indictments seemed to rain down across Ohio. Among them were those charging members of the Toledo and Cincinnati city councils and, in the notorious House Bill 6 case, the speaker of the Ohio House. In each instance, Yost acted to enforce what is right.



In July, a federal grand jury indicted then-Ohio House Speaker **Larry Householder** and four associates in a \$60 million racketeering conspiracy that resulted in a state law mandating \$1.3 billion be collected from Ohioans for nuclear plants operated by a FirstEnergy Corp. subsidiary.

AG Yost moved quickly to take a stand against the law

and stand up for Ohioans. “Ohio laws should not be built on the basis of fraud, deceit and intimidation,” he said.

Among his actions, the attorney general:

- ★ Called on Householder to resign, advised the House that it has the power to eject the speaker and called on the legislature to repeal House Bill 6.

- ★ As the legislature did not repeal the law, filed a lawsuit to (1.) block FirstEnergy from donating money to politicians as they decided whether to overturn the law and (2.) block the company and its subsidiary from receiving the customer subsidy, worth \$150 million annually.
- ★ Filed a complaint with the Ohio Elections Commission after Householder admitted using nearly \$1 million in campaign funds to pay his lawyers. According to state law, political candidates may spend campaign money only on election expenses.
- ★ Filed another lawsuit to prevent the collection of the \$150 million annually from Ohioans. In late December, a Franklin County judge sided with the attorney general.

“The people of Ohio are about to be shaken down for money they should not have to pay based on how HB6 was enacted,” Yost said. “There is no process in place to return the money to residents once it leaves their accounts — so why take it?”

CINCINNATI INDICTMENTS

Ohio law gives AG Yost the power to initiate suspension proceedings when local officials (but not state legislators) are indicted in criminal cases connected to their public job.

Yost started such proceedings after:

- ★ Cincinnati Councilman **Jeffery Pastor** was charged with bribery, extortion, money laundering and other crimes.
- ★ Cincinnati Councilman **P.G. Sittenfeld** was charged with wire fraud, bribery and attempted extortion.

Both agreed to step down after the filings.

In the case of City Councilwoman **Tamaya Dennard** — charged with bribery, attempted extortion and wire fraud — she resigned a day after the AG threatened to start such proceedings.

TOLEDO INDICTMENTS

After City Council members **Larry Sykes**, **Yvonne Harper**, **Gary Johnson** and **Tyrone Riley** were charged with bribery and extortion, Yost initiated suspension proceedings. All four stepped down.

“A suspension is the proper remedy to balance the accused’s right of a presumption of innocence with the public’s interest to have a functioning city council,” Yost said.



SIDE NOTE

Other 2020 corruption cases

Crucial assistance in these cases was provided by the Ohio Attorney General’s Office:

- ★ Sandusky County Prosecutor **Timothy Braun** — charged after female employees accused him of unwanted sexual contact and intimidation — resigned under pressure from AG Yost in January. “No victim of sexual assault, no victim of workplace harassment, could believe she would be treated fairly in an office he oversees,” Yost said.
- ★ **Cuyahoga County Jail**
 - » Corrections Officer **Nicholas Evans** was sentenced to nine months in prison for attempted felonious assault and tampering with evidence after an attack on a restrained inmate.
 - » Corrections Officer **Timothy Dugan** received 10 days in jail for his role in the same attack.
 - » Corrections Officer **Idris-Farid Clark** got 18 months for attempted felonious assault, extortion and unlawful restraint stemming from an attack on another restrained inmate.
 - » Corrections Officer **Robert Marsh** was sentenced to 30 days in jail for his role in that attack.
 - » Corrections Officers **Stephen A. Thomas** and **Marvella Sullivan** received two years in prison and 60 days in jail, respectively, for smuggling drugs and contraband for gang members.
- ★ **Emily McNeeley**, a former Cuyahoga County IT administrator accused of steering million-dollar contracts to her husband’s employer, pleaded guilty and received probation.
- ★ **David Bozanich**, former Youngstown finance director, was sentenced to a year in prison and fined \$10,000 for accepting a bribe and tampering with records.
- ★ **Charles Sammarone**, former Youngstown mayor, was sentenced to five years of probation and community service for felony tampering with records.

‘Turning over every stone’

At the Attorney General’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), a new unit helps solve cold-case homicides and unsolved sexual assault cases. “Either everybody counts or nobody counts,” AG Yost said about forming the Cold Case Unit. “If it was your son or daughter who was murdered in a midsize or small jurisdiction, you’d want to know that every stone was being turned over. That’s what this unit is about. It’s turning over every stone.”

The new unit taps BCI’s proven investigative resources, including state-of-the-art criminal intelligence gathering, laboratory work and forensic analysis. The unit partners with the local law enforcement departments where cases originated to enhance their investigations.

Learn more at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/CCU.

Pictured below are leaders of the Cold Case Unit, from left: Kristen Slaper, Dana Forney and Roger Davis.



VICTIM AID: BY THE NUMBERS

\$5M

The Attorney General’s Office paid out \$5,032,680 to victims of crime and eligible family members from the Ohio Victims of Crime Compensation Fund.

\$55.6M

The grants committed to 343 community agencies totaled \$55,565,621.83 in 2020 – down from the \$96.3 million the year before due to a significant decrease in federal funding. The AG made it a priority to fund groups that directly help victims of sexual assaults, domestic violence and other violent crimes.

1,816

2020 victims’ compensation was paid in 1,816 claims, making the average payment \$2,771.

252,475

Community agencies that received grants helped more than 250,000 people from October 2019 through September 2020.

\$6.63M

The balance of the Ohio Victims of Crime Compensation Fund was \$6,631,462, up 6% from last year after measures were taken to boost the fund.

The Attorney General’s Office found new funding sources for programs traditionally supported by the fund, and AG Yost joined a coalition urging Congress to increase the critical financial support.

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The Attorney General’s Victim Services Section spent an average of 122.8 days processing claims.



SIDE NOTE



The Attorney General’s Office brought online the Ohio Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System, a service that lets victims of sexual assault anonymously check the status of their examination kit evidence, including whether it has been sent to a law enforcement agency or to a crime lab for testing.

“Nurses, police, lab workers and my office — we all have a duty to make sure we’re not compounding victims’ pain by leaving them in the dark,” Yost said.

<http://sakt.ohioattorneygeneral.gov>



'It's the state's turn'

Residents of the Buckeye State were hit with an estimated 2.2 billion robocalls in 2019.*

To fight the scourge, Attorney General Yost started a Robocall Enforcement Unit dedicated to rooting out bad actors at every level of the robocall industry.

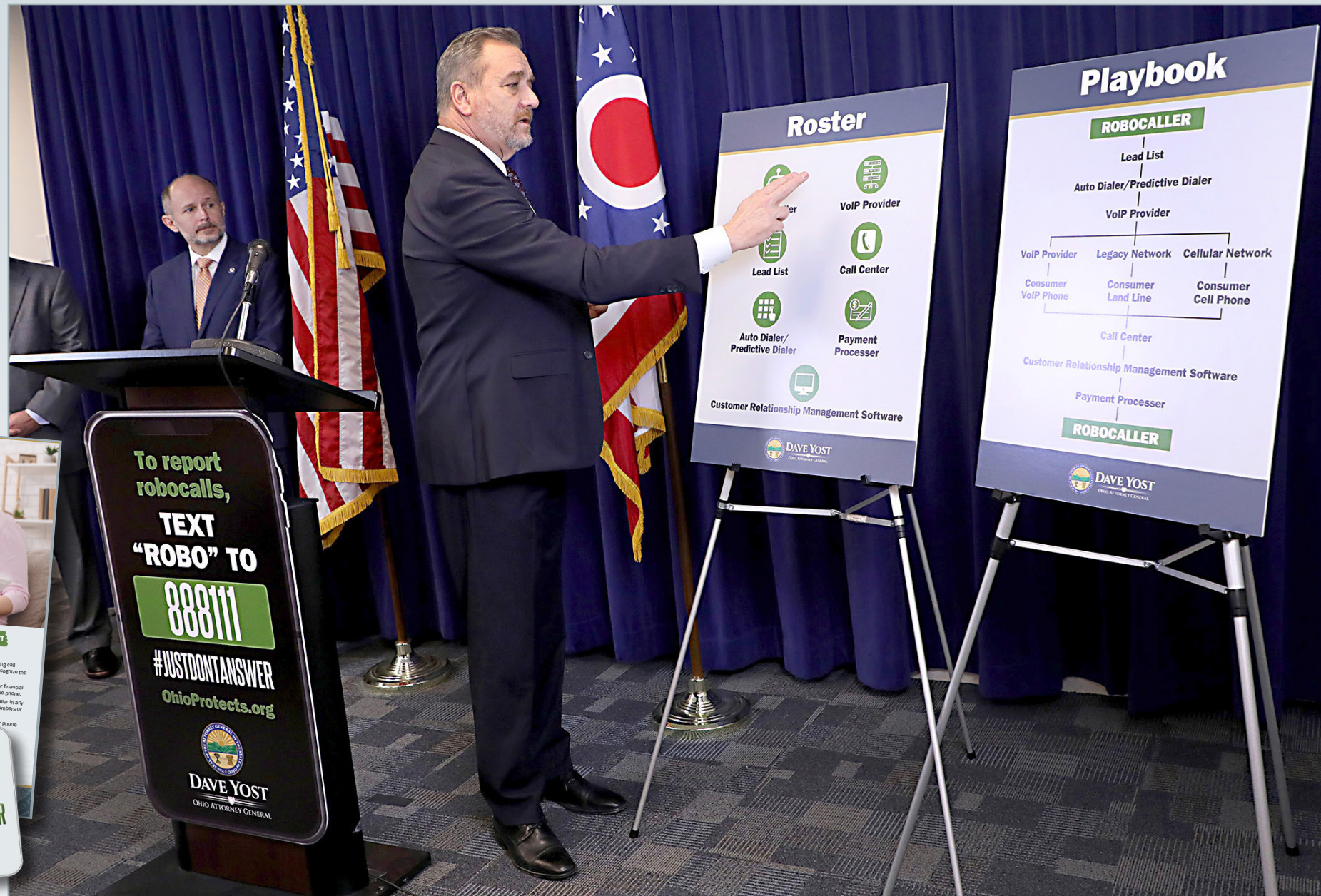
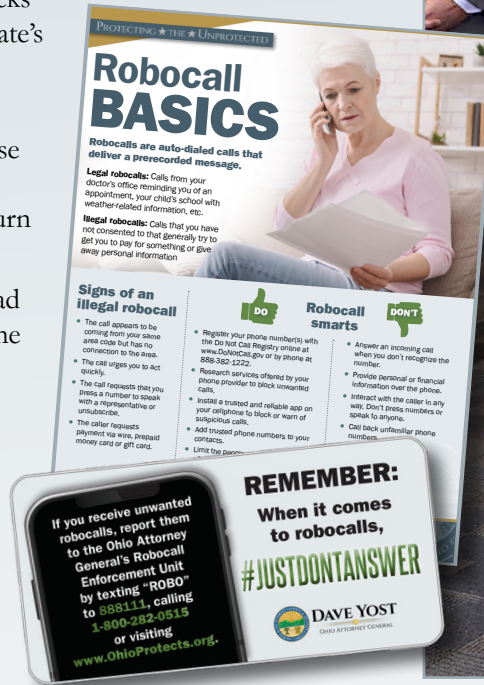
The unit, made up of attorneys and investigators, partners with anti-robocall groups at the national level, investigates suspected violators, takes aggressive enforcement action and seeks legislation to expand the state's authority over robocalls.

"Ohioans are tired of playing defense against these annoying robocalls," Yost said. "Now it's the state's turn to play offense."

To help the unit go after bad actors, Yost created a hotline and urges Ohioans to report robocalls by texting "ROBO" to 888111 and answering a short set of questions. Consumers also can file complaints by visiting OhioProtects.org or calling 1-800-282-0515.

Besides reporting the calls, consumers are advised:

- ★ Don't answer calls if you don't know who the caller is.
- ★ Never interact with a suspected robocaller in any way.
- ★ Avoid providing personal or financial information by phone.
- ★ Register your phone number with the Do Not Call Registry online at DoNotCall.gov or by phone at 1-888-382-1222.



Attorney General Yost outlined the work of the newly created Robocall Enforcement Unit at a press conference early in 2020.

- ★ Research services offered by your phone provider to block unwanted calls.
- ★ Install a trusted and reliable app on your cellphone to block or warn of suspicious calls.

* Statistic from YouMail, a service that tracks robocall traffic.

MONOPOLY CHALLENGES

Yost and attorney generals from other states have filed federal lawsuits against Google and Facebook, accusing them of killing off competition, resulting in fewer privacy protections and options for consumers.

The lawsuits allege that Facebook illegally acquired competitors in a predatory manner and cut services to

smaller firms that threatened its power, and that Google illegally maintains its monopoly over internet search engines and related advertising through a series of exclusionary contracts and conduct. "Facebook's unchecked power has grabbed an alarming level of control over what we see, say, buy and even who our friends are," said Yost, who sits on the executive committee leading the lawsuit. "And Google is stepping on the market, not competing in it."



SIDE NOTE



Individuals and businesses owe public entities in Ohio more than \$63 billion, and Yost is securing a new tool to make paying that money easier than ever.

The process will take some time because the attorney general is committed to getting it done right, but when the new Collections Account Resolution and Enforcement System (CARES) comes online, it will:

- ★ Include the ability to set up payment plans for Ohioans who can afford to pay a portion of their debt each month. Amazingly, the old system wasn't capable of tracking such payments.
- ★ Increase collections by potentially \$50 million, to \$325 million more a year.
- ★ Cost the state treasury nothing; the system will be financed by a bond repaid with debtors' fees.

‘Success is measured by lives saved’

On Jan. 9, 2020, the Attorney General’s Human Trafficking Initiative held its inaugural summit. Seven hundred people, including victims and advocates, registered to hear from Attorney General Yost and experts on labor trafficking, specialty court dockets, safehouses and trafficking prosecutions.

The banner event crowned a year of progress made by the initiative, which seeks to end labor and sex trafficking, a plight faced by vulnerable people throughout Ohio.

“The success of our efforts is measured not only in the number of arrests we make but in the lives that are rescued from this evil,” Yost said.



GOING AFTER TRAFFICKERS

- ★ **Michael Mearan**, a Portsmouth attorney, was indicted in October on 18 felony counts accusing him of running a 15-year scheme involving six victims. He could get 70 years in prison if convicted.
- ★ **Lori Jackson** of Niles was convicted of trafficking in persons in September after she took a minor to a man’s home, where he sexually assaulted the girl. Jackson received 10 years in prison.
- ★ **Paul Chiles**, aka “Tommy Guns,” of Columbus, was indicted in September on 19 felony counts, including trafficking in persons and involuntary manslaughter, after a woman he provided drugs to overdosed and died.
- ★ **Marcus Carmon, Anthony Dunn and Bradley Powell**, all of Columbus, were indicted in August, accused of running a trafficking ring that targeted vulnerable women addicted to drugs.
- ★ **Ronald Hellman Jr.**, of Youngstown, was sentenced in February to 15 years for trafficking young women and juveniles. He specifically targeted the women upon their exit from drug rehabilitation programs.
- ★ The **Rev. Dr. Randolph Brown and Joyce Richmond**, of Cuyahoga County, were indicted in February and accused of running a trafficking scheme that exploited three teenage runaways.

OPERATION AUTUMN HOPE

Ohio
Anti-Human Trafficking Collaboration

- 109** HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS RESCUED
- 76** MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN CASES CLEARED, INCLUDING 45 PHYSICAL RECOVERIES BY THE U.S. MARSHALS SERVICE
- 157** MEN ARRESTED SEEKING TO BUY SEX
- 22** INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED SEEKING TO HAVE SEX WITH A MINOR

STRENGTHENING LAWS

Yost partnered with state legislators in efforts to make Ohio tougher on human trafficking. Measures introduced included creating a database of “johns” to help decrease demand and making it a crime to knowingly receive proceeds from a prostitute.

Several important measures were signed into law as part of House Bill 431, including:

- ★ The separation of the “soliciting” charge so that johns and human trafficking victims no longer face the same punishment for engaging in commercial sex. Buyers will now be subject to enhanced penalties, including “johns school” to drive home the role they play in abusing victims.
- ★ An expansion of protections for 16- and 17-year-old trafficking victims, to match how younger victims are treated in the court process.



CATCHING JOHNS, HELPING VICTIMS

- ★ Fourteen men looking to buy sex via the internet were arrested in a one-day human trafficking operation in December in Youngstown.
- ★ More than 100 trafficking victims were rescued, 45 missing children were found and 157 men were arrested on charges of soliciting and other crimes — including 22 arrests of individuals seeking to have sex with a minor — in a statewide effort in October dubbed Autumn Hope.
- ★ In a one-day sting in March, eight people were arrested in Warren after they tried to buy sex via the internet.

‘Sometimes, superheroes wear lab coats’

In the final quarter of 2020, the Attorney General’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation brought online massively parallel sequencing-based mitochondrial DNA testing for use in cases of missing persons or unidentified remains.

The technology has a big name that boils down to a simple concept: It can find answers when other DNA testing fails.

That happens when old remains become so degraded that a traditional DNA profile — culled from the nucleus of human cells — cannot be identified in the lab. The new testing relies on less-delicate DNA pulled from another organ inside cells: the mitochondria. There might be 100 to 10,000 copies of mtDNA per human cell, compared with two nuclear DNA copies.

Mitochondrial DNA testing is made possible by the massively parallel sequencing technique, which allows millions of fragments of DNA from a single sample to be sequenced in unison rather than one at a time.

The advancement — made in collaboration with Battelle Memorial Institute — makes BCI just the second state crime lab certified to conduct the testing.

The technology has already provided closure for some families:

- ★ In October, bones found in March 2020 were identified as a 61-year-old Carroll County woman who went missing more than a year earlier.
- ★ In November, remains also found in March were identified as a 22-year-old Toledo man who went missing in 2013.

“Sometimes, superheroes wear lab coats,” AG Yost said after the second identification. “Congratulations to our scientists and the investigators who took this cutting-edge technique out of the academic ivory tower and put it to use on the streets.”

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Reinforcing his commitment to taking a scientific approach to environmental protection, AG Yost formed the Scientific Advisory Council to brainstorm the best ways to safeguard Ohio’s natural resources.

The council is composed of subject-matter experts from nine universities throughout the state who are among the



leading professionals in their fields and some of the best scientific minds in Ohio.

Yost expects the team to help his office’s Environmental Protection Section anticipate problems and propose solutions before negative environmental effects play out.

“I applaud Attorney General Yost for bringing these scientists together and for his commitment to using science to inform environmental policy decisions,” said Dr. Christopher Winslow, director of Ohio State University’s Ohio Sea Grant and Stone Lab and co-chair of the advisory council.



THC QUANTIFICATION

After Ohio legalized hemp (cannabis containing 0.3% THC or less), BCI scientists perfected a new method to prove that marijuana seized by law enforcement is indeed the illegal variety — crucial evidence required for prosecuting felony drug cases. BCI implemented quantification in March 2020, ending the need for local authorities to tap expensive private labs to get the evidence.



BCI forensic scientists Lynne Strainic (top right) and Nicole Hall (above left) work in labs at the London location.



SIDE NOTE

Members of the Attorney General’s Scientific Committee on Opioid Prevention & Education (SCOPE), a science-based push to reduce the number of people who succumb to addiction, report that a study is underway to examine the genetics that play a role.

Patients from the emergency rooms at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center and Ohio State University’s Wexner Medical Center have been recruited and will be studied to:

- ★ Determine which genetic markers are associated with the development of opioid use disorder.
- ★ Develop an Addiction Risk Score to better classify patient likelihood for future addiction.
- ★ Determine the prevalence of genetic markers associated with addiction risk in the general population.

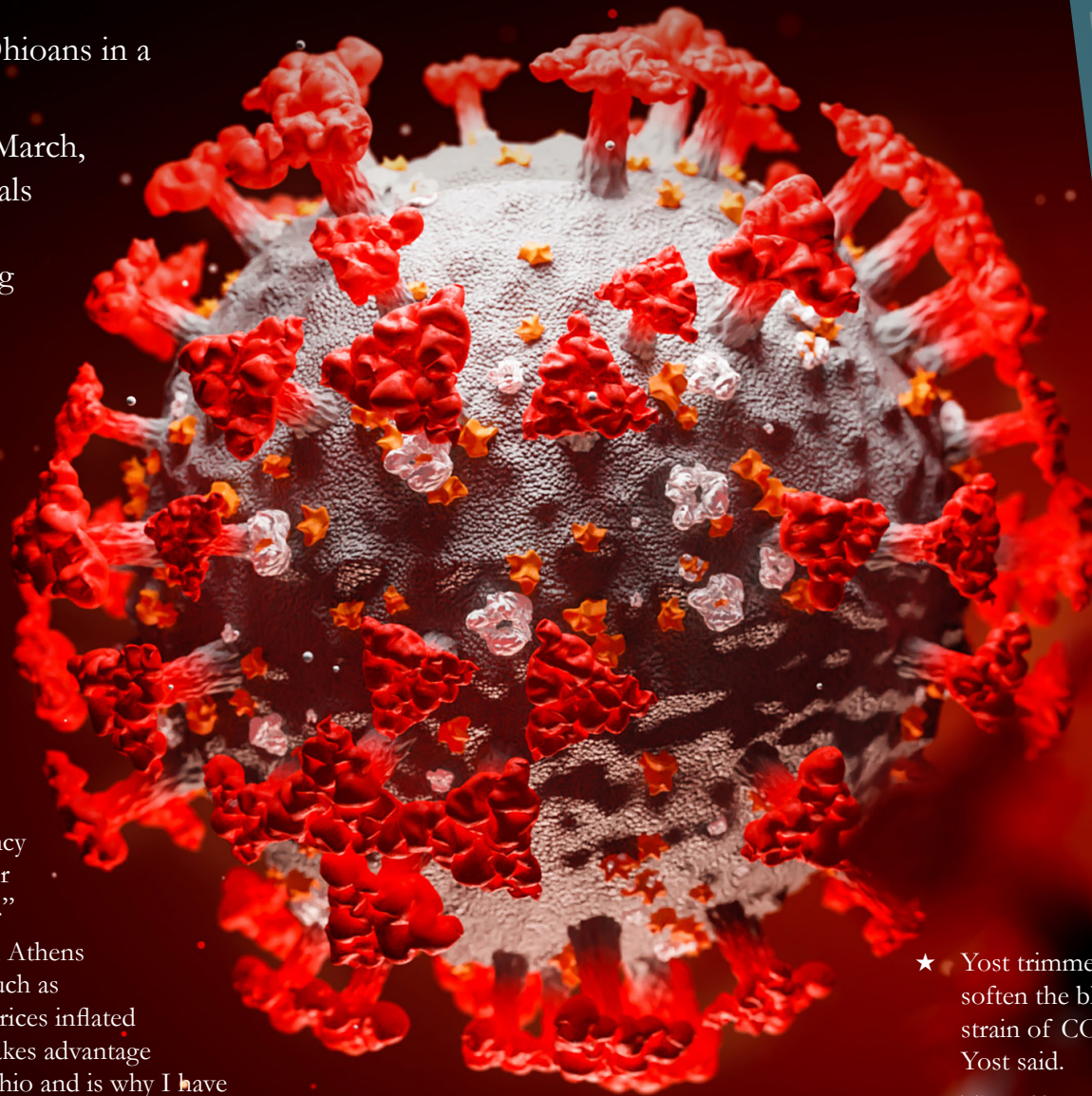
AGO pivots to meet challenges

CCOVID-19 presented grave challenges for Ohioans in a seemingly endless number of ways.

From the start of the state’s quarantine in March, the pandemic complicated public meetings, jury trials and the livelihood of small businesses; it increased the demands made of charities while also strangling resources; and it took a personal toll on many, whether from the stress of a lost job, new work circumstances, remote schooling, a relative falling ill or just new distance between ourselves and our loved ones.

The Attorney General’s Office pivoted to meet each new challenge to ensure we did the most we could to help our customers — the people of Ohio — through a historically difficult time. Among the office’s efforts:

- ★ In April, the attorney general warned debt collectors that they could not target Ohioans’ stimulus checks. “The stimulus checks were intended to be used during an emergency – to put food on the table, keep the lights on and a roof over our heads,” Yost said. “It wasn’t meant to pay off an old bill.”
- ★ Yost declared war on price gougers, filing lawsuits against an Athens couple who jacked up prices for hand sanitizer sold by as much as 1,017.3% and a Chagrin Falls man who sold N95 masks at prices inflated by 1,800%. “Price gouging is appalling behavior and often takes advantage of those in desperate need,” Yost said. “It has no place in Ohio and is why I have been fighting to establish a price-gouging law for our state.”
- ★ The office distributed nearly \$1 million in funding to domestic violence shelters and coalitions across the state to assist battered adults and children in the midst of the pandemic. “While we have been asked to stay at home, sometimes home isn’t the safest place,” Yost said.
- ★ To help law enforcement maintain adequate manpower, Yost ordered OPOTA to expedite final exams for cadets who had completed training and created a program that allows recently retired officers in good standing to return to patrol. “Our brave men and women in uniform will be exposed to the coronavirus, and we need to make sure there are reinforcements should a worst-case scenario materialize,” Yost said.



COVID-19 | STIMULUS CHECKS

- Beware of payment scams.
- You don't need to do anything to get your check.
- Do not give anyone your personal information to "sign up" for your relief check.
- NO ONE has early access to this money.
- Communicate only with the IRS.

COVID-19 | PRICE GOUGING

See a business charging unfair prices?

Tell us at www.OhioProtects.org or 1-800-282-0515



- ★ Yost trimmed more than \$4.6 million from his office’s budget to help soften the blow of COVID-19 on the state’s finances. “The financial strain of COVID-19 demands a hard look at government spending,” Yost said.
- ★ The office ensured consumers were armed against would-be scammers by regularly publicizing guidance and tips. “COVID-19 is not the only thing we have to protect ourselves against,” Yost said. “Thieves and crooks prey on fear and uncertainty.”
- ★ The office converted the annual Two Days in May Conference on Victim Assistance, Law Enforcement Conference and Public Service Mock Trial Competition into virtual events and offered digital-only trainings (including sessions on the state’s Sunshine Laws) that previously were held in person for small groups. A webinar created to advise local officials about enforcing public health orders drew 500 registrants within 24 hours.



SIDE NOTE

In partnering with Ohio State on a series of surveys of Ohio nonprofits, the Attorney General’s Office learned that pinched finances had forced many charities to cut services and more than 250 to close in 2020.

“The stark reality is that even small cuts to Ohio charities have large consequences,” Yost said.

In a related effort, the Attorney General’s Charitable Enforcement Section created charitable.ohioago.gov, a new website that makes it easier for charities to access required forms and information, and more convenient for potential donors to vet charities.

The Attorney General's Office impacted Ohioans' lives in many more ways in 2020, including:



\$40M

After Yost demanded that GM pay back \$60 million it had received in public tax credits before abandoning the Lordstown plant, the automaker agreed to return \$28 million and provide \$12 million to the Mahoning Valley.

\$34M+

Participation by the Attorney General's Office in multistate lawsuits, including those against companies such as Apple, Anthem, Honda and ITT, resulted in more than \$34.5 million sent to Ohio and consumers in the state.



\$2.2M

Yost awarded \$2,216,387 in grants to more than 292 local law enforcement agencies to purchase body armor vests for officers.

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All of the Supreme Court justices who heard the arguments in *Rutledge v. Pharmaceutical Care Management* ruled in favor of states' rights to regulate the rising cost of prescription drugs and pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) — a case Yost had weighed in on. "Ohio will not give up its duty and right to protect its citizens to some federal bureaucrat in Washington, D.C.," he said.



319 POUNDS

Ohio Organized Crime Investigations task forces seized 319 pounds of meth as well as 250 pounds of cocaine, 175 pounds of fentanyl and 28 pounds of heroin — drugs that now won't make it to the streets to further entrap Ohioans struggling with addiction.

13

A task force empaneled by AG Yost made 13 recommendations for how to ensure facial recognition is operated fairly in Ohio. The proposals included banning "live" facial recognition and limiting how the technology can be used and by whom.



246

The Attorney General's Office opened 246 civil investigations into unfair, deceptive or unconscionable business practices and filed 46 lawsuits as a result. It also fielded 24,075 consumer complaints from individuals, small businesses and nonprofits in 2020.

4

Four people with mental illnesses were moved to safer accommodations after the attorney general secured a temporary restraining order against a housing complex in Toledo where a patient died in November.

The Attorney General's Office consists of more than 30 sections and special divisions, each with distinct duties. The teams work hard to fight crime and help victims heal, support law enforcement and consumers, and safeguard those in need. The public-facing sections and divisions are:

ANTITRUST

The section promotes competition in the marketplace by enforcing state and federal antitrust laws. It also offers training to government personnel on detecting bid-rigging and safeguarding the procurement process against vendor collusion.

APPEALS

The section, headed by the state solicitor, represents the state and its agencies on appeals in the U.S. Supreme Court, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and the Ohio Supreme Court. The Appeals Section determines the cases for which the state will seek review and the positions it will take in those cases.

BUREAU OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

The state's official crime lab and criminal records repository, BCI serves the criminal justice community and offers expert investigative services to local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. The bureau has five major divisions: Identification, Laboratory, OHLEG, Special Investigative Services and Technical Investigations.

CENTER FOR THE FUTURE OF FORENSIC SCIENCE

At the Ohio Attorney General's Center for the Future of Forensic Science at Bowling Green State University, forensic science students learn to work with cutting-edge tools that BCI uses at its nearby crime lab and researchers focus on issues that can help solve future crimes in Ohio.

CHARITABLE LAW

The section regulates charities in the state to ensure that donations are not misappropriated and that proceeds are used for charitable purposes. The section encourages sound board governance, oversees a registry of charities and professional solicitors, and licenses bingo operations. It also represents Ohio's Liquor Commission, Lottery Commission, Horseracing Commission and Casino Commission.

CIVIL RIGHTS

The section represents the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, prosecuting cases on its behalf. The Civil Rights Section also conducts free training for employers, HR professionals, landlords, condo associations and businesses throughout Ohio to promote compliance with fair employment and fair housing laws.

COLLECTIONS ENFORCEMENT

The section collects outstanding debt for state government agencies, boards and commissions, and all public colleges and universities. It also works with more than 539 local governments and courts to collect their outstanding debts. In 2020, the section collected \$447.8 million, which was returned to its government and school clients.

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

The section operates the Attorney General's Help Center, which the public can contact to file a complaint against a business; report tips on illegal gaming, health care fraud and patient abuse; request educational materials; and more. In 2020, the Help Center fielded 86,081 phone calls, handled 31,282 online inquiries and received 7,320 pieces of mail.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICES

The section acts as legal counsel for all elected officials in statewide offices. It includes the Public Records Unit, which publishes the annual Sunshine Law Manual.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

The section ensures a safe and strong marketplace for consumers and businesses through education, dispute resolution and enforcement of consumer laws. Eight units within the section are tasked with more specific duties, including investigating and prosecuting violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act, educating Ohioans about their rights, and resolving consumer disputes.

COURT OF CLAIMS DEFENSE

The section defends the state in cases filed in the Ohio Court of Claims and argues appeals of those cases in the

10th District Court of Appeals and the Ohio Supreme Court. The section's Construction Litigation Unit prosecutes defective construction claims on behalf of the state.

CRIME VICTIM SERVICES

The section provides funding and services to victims, training to professionals who assist them and crime prevention programs to Ohio communities. It also puts on the annual Two Days in May Conference on Victim Assistance, is responsible for the administration of the federal Victims of Crime Act and State Victims Assistance Act grant programs, and houses the Human Trafficking Initiative.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The section has three units:

- ★ **The Capital Crimes Unit** works to uphold death sentences, which can require years of litigation in federal courts. The unit also aids, by request, county prosecutors trying death penalty cases.
- ★ **The Habeas Unit** works to keep dangerous criminals in prison by opposing litigation brought by inmates who seek to overturn valid convictions.
- ★ **The Corrections Unit** represents Ohio's Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and Department of Youth Services in lawsuits brought by inmates.

EDUCATION

The section handles litigation for the Ohio Department of Education and the State Board of Education; works to revoke or suspend the licenses of educators who fail to meet professional obligations; and provides legal counsel to universities, community colleges and technical colleges.

EMPLOYMENT LAW

The section provides legal advice and representation on employment matters to state departments, agencies, commissions, elected officials and public colleges and universities. These services save state resources by protecting against unsupported legal claims, reduce legal fees for outside counsel and help ensure that the state employs people worthy of public trust.



HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

The section represents the Department of Aging; Department of Insurance and health-related professional licensing boards; the Department of Health; the Department of Medicaid and Department of Job and Family Services; the Unemployment Compensation Division of ODJFS; and the Department of Developmental Disabilities, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and State Board of Psychology.

HEALTH CARE FRAUD

In 2020, the section was responsible for 170 indictments and 148 convictions as well as the recovery of \$41 million in restitution orders and settlements. It consists of two units:

★ **The Medicaid Fraud Control Unit** investigates and prosecutes health care providers who defraud the state Medicaid program and also enforces Ohio's Patient Abuse and Neglect Law, which protects the mentally and physically disabled and the elderly from neglect and abuse in long-term-care facilities. For the seventh year in a row, the unit ranked either No. 1 or 2 for both indictments and convictions among all 53 MFCUs in the United States. In the most recent fiscal year, it ranked No. 1 in both categories.

★ **The Workers' Compensation Fraud Unit** prosecutes claimants, employers and health care providers who defraud the Ohio Workers' Compensation Program.

OHIO ORGANIZED CRIME INVESTIGATIONS COMMISSION

The commission assists local law enforcement agencies in combating pervasive organized crime — drug dealing and human trafficking, for example — through the creation of task forces composed of law enforcement officers and justice officials. The task forces receive wider jurisdiction and subpoena powers as well as operational help, funding and commission oversight.

OHIO PEACE OFFICER TRAINING ACADEMY

The academy and the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission oversee training and certification requirements for the 33,000 law officers in the state

and private-security, corrections and humane agents. Staff members also put on the Fallen Officers Memorial and Law Enforcement Conference.

POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The section works with state legislators and their staff members to turn ideas into initiatives and laws that better protect Ohioans.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

The section represents the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio and the Power Siting Board, which reviews plans for new energy facilities. In 2020, the section helped secure \$936,000 in forfeitures and \$1.7 million in refunds/credits to customers from competitive retail electric and natural gas providers (for violations of marketing and solicitation rules), a \$1 million forfeiture from a utility company (for gas pipeline safety violations) and \$69,273 in forfeitures from motor carrier companies and drivers (after PUCO settlements and administrative hearings).

SPECIAL PROSECUTIONS

Upon the request of a local authority, AGO attorneys can serve as lead prosecutors in cases in which a conflict of interest exists. Also, local prosecutors can call upon those in the section to serve as assistant prosecutors in cases that require specialized knowledge or greater resources. In 2020, the section opened 162 criminal matters in more than 49 of Ohio's 88 counties. The section had eight trials during that time, and three ended with a guilty verdict or plea.

TAXATION

The section represents the tax commissioner of Ohio, who is charged with administering and enforcing the state income tax, sales and use taxes, and several business and excise taxes.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The section provides legal counsel and advice to the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation and the Industrial Commission of Ohio. Typically, the cases focus on whether a claimant is entitled to participate in the workers' compensation fund and what type of benefits a claimant may be entitled to receive.



DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

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