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The StarPress WEEKEND

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PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Group lobbies Ohio for 'Christian culture'



Church leaders pray over Attorney General, Dave Yost during prayer service at the Ohio Statehouse Aug. 14. The program was organized by Center for Christian Value, a powerful state lobby group. JESSICA PHELPS/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Organization amasses money, power to exert influence

Victoria Moorwood and Jessie Balmert
Cincinnati Enquirer
USA TODAY NETWORK - OHIO

COLUMBUS, OH — People stomped their feet, sang and clapped their hands.

They reached their arms to the ceiling, tears streaming down their faces.

The rows of seats gave the appearance of a fervent church congregation.

But it wasn't a church. It was the Ohio Statehouse.

This was the scene at Prayer at the Statehouse, hosted by the Center for Christian Virtue, in August.

The nonprofit began as a little-known group of anti-pornography crusaders in Cincinnati over 40 years ago.

Now, it is Ohio's largest Christian policy group with headquarters directly across from the Statehouse.

Over the past decade, CCV has lobbied on more than 300 bills and created a network of religious schools and churches. Since 2020, its revenue has quadrupled, raising more than \$4 million last year.

CCV is backed by major conservative figures and groups such as the Heritage Foundation. Conservative activist Charlie Kirk was slated to be a keynote speaker at CCV's Sept. 26 gala. He was assassinated on Sept. 10 during a Turning Point USA event in Utah.

Voters and lawmakers who support CCV's mission see the organization as "advocating for what is right" in Ohio. Opponents say the group's growing leverage is "dangerous" and blurs the lines between church and state.

CCV has been designated as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center for its anti-LGBTQ stances. The group's president previously dismissed the center as "liberal political hacks" on

social media.

At the August prayer event, attendees laid their hands on Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, who knelt on the floor with his palms outstretched to receive prayers from religious leaders. Months earlier, CCV's president had endorsed Yost's competitor, Vivek Ramaswamy, for Ohio governor.

A pastor lectured about premarital abstinence and the "sanctity" of heterosexual marriage. Secretary of State Frank LaRose, also a Republican, addressed those who might find prayer in the Statehouse "out of place."

"I think it is altogether appropriate that we raise the mighty name of the Lord here in this house where this work is done," LaRose said.

The Center for Christian Virtue's growing influence represents a shift in how Christian conservatives engage with politics in Ohio and nationwide. The libertarian bent in Republican politics is fading. Now, Christian lobbyists

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Note to readers

Due to the upcoming Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday, there will be no mail delivery on Monday, Jan. 19. Instead of receiving your Jan. 19 paper on Monday, you'll receive it in the mail on Tuesday, Jan. 20.

Braun appoints Dollyne Sherman to board

McDaniel and Griffith also reappointed

Jane Imbody

AI-assisted reporter
USA TODAY NETWORK

Indiana Gov. Mike Braun has appointed Dollyne Sherman to the Ball State University Board of Trustees.

Braun also reappointed trustees Mike McDaniel and Julie K. Griffith to new terms on the board, each effective through Dec. 31, 2029, according to a community announcement. Sherman's appointment began Jan. 1.

Decades of service and leadership

Sherman has more than four decades of experience in state and local government and the private sector, with expertise in public policy, strategic communications, media and public relations, and crisis communications. She is the owner of DS Consulting, which she formed in 1994 to serve clients in the public, private and philanthropic sectors.

Sherman served 17 years in state and local government in roles including state representative (House District 93), deputy commissioner of external affairs for the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles, director of media and communications for Indianapolis Mayor

See SHERMAN, Page 2A

Facebook threat leads to man's arrest on intimidation

Douglas Walker

Muncie Star Press

USA TODAY NETWORK

An investigation of online threats of violence directed at schools and day-care facilities resulted in the arrest of a rural Middletown man on Wednesday, Jan. 14.

Lance Ethan Armendariz, 22, was being held in the Delaware County Jail under a \$5,000 bond, on suspicion of intimidation and invasion of privacy.

According to Jeff Stanley, chief deputy of the Delaware County Sheriff's De-

partment, Daleville police on Monday evening were "notified of a Facebook post that referenced threats of violence and harm toward schools and day cares."

Although specific targets were not mentioned, "investigators had reason to believe (the threat) originated locally," Stanley said.

The case was then referred to the sheriff's department for further investigation.

Daleville police notified local schools and day cares of the "vague threat" out of "an abundance of caution," Stanley

said.

Police patrols in the area were increased, and "school locations were monitored," according to the chief deputy.

Stanley said through a "coordinated investigative effort" involving the sheriff's department, Daleville police and Daleville Community Schools, "a suspect was identified and taken into custody."

The sheriff's department's news release announcing Wednesday's arrest did not include the suspect's name.

"The case remains an active investi-

gation, and additional charges may be pending," the release said.

According to court records, Amendariz has been convicted of attempted obstruction of justice, battery against a public safety official, criminal trespass, disorderly conduct, domestic battery, resisting law enforcement and strangulation.

He has faced criminal charges in Delaware, Grant and Madison counties.

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