



'THIS IS NOT IRAQ'

DEFENSE SECRETARY PETE HEGSETH SAID MONDAY THAT THE U.S. IS NOT ENGAGED IN A NATION-BUILDING EFFORT IN IRAN, SAYING "THIS IS NOT IRAQ. THIS IS NOT ENDLESS." A6

WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Ohio's congressional delegation split on military action



An F/A-18E Super Hornet prepares to make a landing onto the USS Abraham Lincoln on Monday after completing a mission in support of Operation Epic Fury — what the Pentagon is calling U.S. and Israel strikes against Iran. U.S. Navy via AP

Republicans praise Operation Epic Fury as decisive action against terrorism, while Dems from Northeast Ohio call the strikes unconstitutional.

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Ohio's congressional delegation was sharply divided over the Trump administration's military strikes against Iran, with Republicans largely backing the president's action and Democrats demanding congressional authorization as the conflict continued to widen Monday.

The U.S. and Israel launched strikes Saturday against Iran in what the Pentagon called Operation Epic Fury, killing Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and targeting the country's missile and nuclear infrastructure.

By Monday, the conflict had expanded dramatically, with Iran retaliating against Israel, Gulf Arab states and oil infrastructure. According to the Associated Press, at least 555 Iranians, 11 Israelis and four Amer-



Plumes of smoke from two simultaneous strikes rise over Tehran on Monday. Mohsen Ganji, Associated Press

ican troops had been killed. Ohio's Republican U.S. senators stood behind Trump's decision.

Sen. Bernie Moreno of Westlake said the president exhausted diplomatic options before acting.

"President Trump sought for months to avoid conflict and negotiate with Iran to prevent them from rebuilding their nuclear

program," said a statement from Moreno. "I fully support his decision to eliminate the threat once and for all once it became clear there was no other option. President Trump will always put America's interests first and defend American citizens. I have complete trust in him to finally bring peace to the Middle East."

Columbus-area Sen. Jon Husted said he looked forward to being briefed by the administration.

"For 47 years, the Iranian regime had ample opportunity to be a productive member of the global community," Husted posted on X. "Instead, it chose to export death, terrorism, extremism, and instability against America and our allies. It did all of this while brutally oppressing its own people, who yearned for the freedom and prosperity that they deserve but the regime has refused to deliver."

Democrats who represent Northeast Ohio called for congressional oversight over the action.

U.S. Rep. Shontel Brown, a Warrensville Heights Democrat, said that when the House of Representatives considers an Iran-related war powers resolution this week, she'll "support it just as I have supported every similar effort this Congress."

SEE WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST, A2

FIRSTENERGY BRIBERY CASE

A dead man's actions take center stage at bribery trial

Sam Randazzo died by suicide in 2024 after being accused of accepting \$4.3M from FirstEnergy in exchange for favorable regulatory rulings.

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Two former FirstEnergy executives have spent weeks in an Akron court facing corruption accusations. Yet much of the conversation has focused on a dead man: Sam Randazzo.

Randazzo's death has cast a wide shadow over the trial of the company's ex-CEO Chuck Jones and ex-lobbyist Michael Dowling, who are accused of bribing the former state utility regulator.

For more than a month, prosecutors and defense attorneys have sparred over Randazzo's motivations, decisions and his relationship with FirstEnergy.

One aspect remains uncontested: Both sides have portrayed Randazzo as a corrupt attorney and conman who leveraged his reputation as one of the state's top energy attorneys to steal from his clients and hide it from nearly everyone, including his longtime secretary Deb Ryan.

"I have a hard time processing that he was doing anything, I guess, illegal or unethical," Ryan said during a deposition played at trial.

At times, testimony has focused more on Randazzo than Jones or Dowling. On Monday, a Public Utilities Commission of Ohio deputy director continued testifying about Randazzo's actions during his stint as PUCO chairman from April 2019 to his resignation in November 2020.

Randazzo died by suicide in April 2024 after being charged by both state and federal prosecutors. He was accused of accepting a \$4.3 million bribe from Jones and Dowling. In exchange, prosecutors say he issued regulatory rulings worth millions to FirstEnergy and lobbying on behalf of scandal-ridden House Bill 6, which gave a \$1 billion bailout to two aging nuclear power plants.

SEE FIRSTENERGY BRIBERY CASE, A2

OHIO SPORTS FACILITIES FUND

State eliminates eight applicants seeking money

14 sports facility projects across Ohio, including three in Cleveland, are seeking a combined \$689 million.

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Eight of the 22 mostly smaller applicants seeking state money for new or renovated sports facilities have been eliminated from consideration after being deemed not eligible for the program.

The Ohio Budget Management Office released an updated list of applicants Monday, showing the biggest projects in Cleveland, Cincinnati and Akron remain under consideration.

Still in the running are requests by the Cleveland Cavaliers, Cleveland Guardians, Akron Rubberducks and Lake County Captains for updates or repairs to their homes, plus money for construction of a 10,000-seat soccer stadium in downtown Cleveland.

Axed from consideration were requests from the city of Obetz, village of New London and private organizations for smaller projects. OBM did not explain the reasoning beyond saying they did not qualify.

This reduced the total being sought to \$688.8 million for \$2.69 billion in work across Ohio. The program permits state funding for up to 25% of work.

The money would come from \$400 million set aside this fiscal year from the state's unclaimed funds, and possibly more in later years from the account.

This application process is separate from

money for the Browns' new indoor football stadium in Brook Park. Some \$600 million in unclaimed funds for that project was written into state law.

Using the unclaimed funds, however, is subject to a legal challenge. A Franklin County magistrate is expected to rule soon on whether distributing money should remain on hold, pending the outcome of the case.

Here is an overview of the 14 remaining applications.

\$234,178,996: Paycor Stadium, Cincinnati, home of the NFL's Bengals. Hamilton County is proposing a \$936,715,980 project that would include upgrades to seating, gathering spaces and technology, plus infrastructure work, at the 26-year-old stadium on the riverfront.

SEE OHIO SPORTS FACILITIES FUND, A2



SPORTS

Browns acquire RT

The Browns on Monday traded for Texans right tackle Tytus Howard, sending a Houston a fifth-round pick. Howard was the No. 23 overall selection in 2019. C1

POLITICS

Big vote in Texas

Two hotly contested U.S. Senate primaries in Texas will help officially kick off the 2026 midterm election cycle today. A7

