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Ohio civic centers focus of new bill



A new Ohio Senate bill would grant university civics centers greater autonomy, even as enrollment at the centers has varied widely by campus. One of the state's five civics centers is the Salmon P. Chase Center for Civics, Culture, and Society at Ohio State University, whose campus is pictured above on Aug. 26, 2025.

ADAM CAIRNS/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

State lawmaker doubles down, calls for bigger role

Emma Wozniak
Columbus Dispatch | USA TODAY NETWORK

The architect of Ohio's state-funded university civics centers wants to expand their influence, even as student demand looks modest and uneven from campus to campus.

Sen. Jerry Cirino (R-Kirtland) is backing legislation that would give the centers "sole authority" over faculty and curriculum while also making them "exclusive providers" of an American civics course that most

public university students now must complete in order to earn a bachelor's degree following Senate Bill 1.

Cirino's latest proposal, Senate Bill 461, arrives three years after lawmakers first created civics centers at five Ohio universities and one year after Senate Bill 1 overhauled higher education – banning diversity, equity and inclusion programming, among other things – in an effort to curb "liberal bias" on campus.

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Don't cut out veggies, state health experts urge amid cyclospora surge

Samantha Hendrickson
Columbus Dispatch | USA TODAY NETWORK

The Ohio Department of Health is urging people to keep produce in their diet, despite fears of infection from the gut-churning parasite surging in the United States and commonly linked to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Cases of cyclosporiasis, the gastrointestinal illness causing serious digestive distress, including what's been described as "explosive diarrhea," have been rising in the U.S. all summer. Both state health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have reported tens of thousands of cases in what health experts have called an unprecedented outbreak.

Ohio has over 4,000 cases, as reported by ODH on July 31.

The CDC declared that Ohio's outbreak started in May, and the Buckeye State ranks second in case count for the stomach parasite, which people get from consuming food or liquids contaminated by feces. Fresh produce is the most common culprit, but no source has

been identified in either the main outbreak or smaller ones. Iceberg lettuce is a possible link.

Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff, director of the state health department, emphasized that people should not avoid produce, but instead be increasingly vigilant about food safety at home.

"Summer is such a great time for healthy, fresh foods. We just need to take some extra steps to protect our health," Vanderhoff said in an Aug 4 press conference.

Some links, but some sources still unknown amid first deaths

Ohio's case count is only second to Michigan's, whose state health department recently reported over 11,000 cases and the first two deaths connected to cyclospora. Both individuals had serious underlying medical conditions at the time of infection, Michigan's health department noted.

Cyclosporiasis is not typically fatal, but certain

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From Marine Corps to commissioner

Sheppard built career of service

Dan Starcher
Communications Coordinator for Wayne County

WAYNE COUNTY—For more than four decades, public service has been a defining theme in Mark Sheppard's life.

Whether serving in the United States Marine Corps, representing residents as a village council member, acting mayor, Wayne County Commissioner, or leading environmental services at the Wayne County Care Center, Sheppard said each role shared a common purpose — serving others.

That career of service came full circle recently as the current Wayne County Board of Commissioners honored Sheppard with a proclamation recognizing his retirement after 23 years as environmental services director at the Wayne County Care Center and more than 31 years in public service.

Commissioner Matt Martin said Sheppard's career reflects a lifelong commitment to Wayne County.

"Mark has devoted his life to serving others, whether it was in the Marine Corps, on West Salem Village Council, as a county commissioner, or caring

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Wayne County Commissioner Matt Martin, right, congratulates retiring Wayne County Care Center Environmental Services Director and former Wayne County Commissioner Mark Sheppard following a retirement ceremony. PROVIDED BY DAN STARCHER

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