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ONLY IN THE JOURNAL-NEWS

County may sue over land near rail crossing

Engineer wants to build access road in St. Clair Twp.; farmer doesn't want to give up 5 acres.

By Denise G. Callahan
Contributing Writer

St. Clair Twp. residents in the Cedar Grove subdivision know the headache of getting trapped

at a railroad crossing there, and the Butler County Engineer's Office has sought to fix the problem for years.

Now, there could be a lawsuit if the farmer who owns the land continues fighting not to give it up.

Butler County Engineer Greg Wilkens recently told county commissioners his office needs access to a federal agricultural easement, or five acres of land, to build a new road that would run parallel

to the train tracks, but they may have to sue the farmer to get it.

"It's going to be expensive, I mean that goes all the way up to the Supreme Court when you get into that type of litigation," Wilkens said.

More than four years ago, a group of Cedar Grove residents petitioned the commissioners asking for help.

Crossing continued on A6



Residents of the Cedar Grove subdivision in St. Clair Twp. have hoped for years that the Butler County commissioners can help solve a problem with slow or stopped trains blocking access for emergency and other vehicles. STAFF FILE

CLOSER LOOK

Group says 'significant' tax reforms insufficient

Citizens for Property Tax Reform are trying to get on the ballot.

By Denise G. Callahan
Contributing Writer

Ohio House lawmakers are touting the recent passage of several property tax bills as the most significant reforms in 50 years but the group working to abolish those taxes says it isn't enough.

The House has passed two tax measures that will provide \$2.4 billion in tax relief over three years by limiting increases to inflation. House Speaker Matt Huffman said, "I think this should convince a reasonable voter, a reasonable citizen in Ohio, that something significant has been done."

"It perhaps took a push like it often does for something extraordinary to get something extraordinary done, this is a big deal," Huffman added. "As a result of these things over the next three years there's going to be \$2.4 billion less paid which is about a 10% cut, that's significant."

The bills are designed to prevent unvoted property tax spikes people have had to pay over the last five years, due to a host of factors, some of them pandemic related and others due to lawmakers tinkering with school funding and other tax laws through the years.

Statehouse conversations touching property taxes these days invariably turn to the grass-roots group from Cuyahoga County, Citizens for Property Tax Reform, that is attempting to put a constitutional amendment to eliminate property taxes



The Ohio House has passed two tax measures that will provide \$2.4 billion in tax relief for property owners in communities like Moraine over three years by limiting increases to inflation. NICK GRAHAM / STAFF

entirely on the statewide November 2026 ballot.

Their spokeswoman Beth Blackmarr told this media outlet for "strategic" reasons they will not reveal how many petition signatures they've collected — they've been gathering since May and need roughly 600,000 — but they have signing stations in 63 counties and circulators statewide. The filing deadline is July 1, 2026.

As for the reform measures the House is touting, she said her tax bill jumped 51.9% and

these bills won't fix that.

"What they're doing now is a stop gap to keep from hitting us harder. We're already hit and the real estate market is flattening, so how does this help us," she said and later added. "Some of the stuff they're saying just doesn't jive and some of moves they're making, they're like it's \$2.7 billion over three years, well big deal, that's like three percent."

Blackmarr said while she isn't impressed with the effort so far, a Senate bill that just emerged from a dormant state — it's been

sitting on the shelf of unheard bills since May — could convince voters not to vote for their ballot initiative.

Senate Bill 206 — with an estimated \$1.5 billion price tag — would pay up to 50% of the property tax bills for homeowners age 65-plus, regardless of income. She said it would be "significant, that would help tremendously, I hope this thing makes it because people are looking for relief, immediate relief."

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TOP NATIONAL
STORY

Shutdown likely to become longest in nation's history

As it enters 6th week, Trump says he 'won't be extorted' by Dems.

By Mary Clare Jalonick
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The government shutdown is poised to become the longest ever this week as the impasse between Democrats and Republicans has dragged into a new month. Millions of people stand to lose food aid benefits, health care subsidies are set to expire and there are few real talks between the parties over how to end it.

President Donald Trump said in an interview aired on Sunday that he "won't be extorted" by Democrats who are demanding negotiations to extend the expiring Affordable Care Act subsidies. Echoing congressional Republicans, the president said on CBS' "60 Minutes" he'll negotiate only when the government is reopened.

Trump said Democrats "have lost their way" and predicted they'll capitulate to Republicans.

"I think they have to," Trump said. "And if they don't vote, it's their problem."

Trump's comments signal the shutdown could drag on for some time as federal workers, including air traffic controllers, are set to

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THE LATEST

Lawyer disputes FBI's allegations of terror plot in Michigan. **B1**

Five more arrested in connection with heist of crown jewels. **B2**

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