

A legislative update from
STATE REP. THOMAS WEST
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From the desk of Rep. West

Dear Neighbor,

As the spring season sets in and the days grow longer, our collective energy is restored and renewed in order to continue making progress for Ohio's 49th District. Undoubtedly, many Ohioans are working harder than ever, putting in long hours to make ends meet, yet many still can't get ahead. The reality is that too many working people feel like they're stuck in an endless cycle of struggle and frustration.

Ohio was once a state where you could find good paying, middle class jobs with strong communities for families and great schools for children. But years of broken promises from politicians in Washington and Columbus have turned the tables on everyday Ohioans.

The time for real change is long overdue. That's why we've committed ourselves to restoring the American Dream right here in Ohio, in order to ensure better lives, better jobs, and brighter futures for all. If you work hard and play by the rules, you should be able to get ahead and have the opportunity to retire with security and stability. That's the vision we share for our treasured state.

My commitment to you is simple: as your state representative, I work for you. We will work together on a framework for our future by investing in our children's education, creating an economy that works for every Ohioan, and ensuring local communities can afford essential services, like police, fire, and emergency personnel, to keep our families safe. My office is here for anyone who needs assistance for any reason, and we can be reached using the contact information above. Together, we will continue our work to ensure all families are able to live the American Dream at home, right here in Ohio.

Sincerely,

Thomas West
 State Representative

Jewish American Heritage Month

May is Jewish American Heritage Month, a time to pay tribute to the generations of Jewish Americans who helped form the fabric of American history, culture and society.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, [anti-Semitic incidents in Ohio rose to a 40-year high in 2020](#), with a 72 percent increase in events from the year before.

HB 341 would create the Bureau of Hate Crimes to conduct independent investigations for hate crimes when sufficient cause exists. This bill would send a strong message of solidarity to at-risk communities by focusing resources not only on deterrence, but prosecution of hate crimes. All Ohioans deserve to be able to live safely and securely in our state.

H.B. 638 Spotlight

On Wednesday, April 27th, [Representatives West and Davis introduced H.B. 638](#), a bill that eliminates late fees that have resulted from United States Postal Service delays.

The bill prohibits debt collectors, including state and local government agencies, from charging late fees that result from United States Postal Service delays. This legislation, which was advocated by Mr. Dan Fonte, the Jefferson-Jackson Club Chairman from Canton, also declares an emergency to

Rep. West Condemns 'Don't Say Gay' bill

Representative West condemns the recent introduction of [House Bill \(HB\) 616](#), the Ohio Republican version of Florida's 'Don't Say Gay' law. Under HB 616, schools could not "teach, use, or provide any curriculum or instructional materials on sexual orientation or gender identity" in kindergarten through third grade. Additionally, older students could not be taught "any curriculum or instructional materials on sexual orientation or gender identity in any manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards."

HB 616 is simply the latest draconian censorship bill introduced this General Assembly by House Republicans. Republicans also sponsored HB 327, which would make "failing to fairly present both sides of a political or ideological belief or position" conduct unbecoming of an Ohio educator, prompting [widespread alarm](#) from teachers and concerned parents. HB 327 has received five hearings in the House State and Local Government committee, and was nearing a committee vote until the Republican bill sponsor [made inaccurate and anti-Semitic comments about the Holocaust](#) during an interview.

While Republicans continue [their attacks on LGBTQ+ Ohioans](#), Democrats, such as Representative West, are calling for action on the [Ohio Fairness Act](#), bipartisan legislation that would protect LGBTQ+ Ohioans from discrimination in employment, housing and accommodations. The Ohio Fairness Act was introduced in March 2021, but has yet to receive a single hearing.

The majority of Ohio business owners support adding LGBTQ+ non-discrimination to Ohio law, with [more than 50 percent saying nondiscrimination laws improve businesses' bottom lines](#). [More than 800 leading Ohio businesses and organizations](#) have backed the Ohio Fairness Act, which they say will attract workers, increase investment and grow the state's economy. Conversely, [business-minded organizations](#) have expressed concerns behind closed doors about the legal uncertainty these Republican censorship bills would impose. These censorship bills are bad for students, bad for business, and bad for our state.



49th District Spotlight

On Tuesday, April 26th, [Representative West announced funds for Canton's new Centennial Plaza Hotel](#).

The structure that will become the Centennial Plaza Hotel was constructed in 1914 as the Renkert Building. This historic establishment was the city of Canton's first skyscraper, but the 10-story building has sat vacant since 2017.

The source of these new funds, the Brownfield Remediation Program, was created in the 133rd General Assembly, and they will be used to remove materials containing asbestos from this historic building. The removal of these toxic materials will allow for the planned redevelopment of the 10-story building into a 92-room extended-stay hotel across from Canton's Centennial Plaza.



Helpful contacts

- Jobs and Family Services:** www.jfs.ohio.gov
- Veteran Services 888-296-7541
- Unemployment 877-644-6562
- Bureau of Motor Vehicles:** www.bmv.ohio.gov
- General Information 800-589-TAGS
- Public Safety:** www.publicsafety.ohio.gov
- Highway Patrol 877-7-PATROL
- DUI Hotline 800-GRAB-DUI
- Taxation:** www.tax.ohio.gov
- Form Requests 800-282-1782
- Taxpayer Assistance 800-282-1780
- Aging:** www.aging.ohio.gov
- Golden Buckeye Card 866-301-6446
- Elder Rights Unit 800-282-1206