



On Two Big Issues, Ohio General Assembly Made the Right Call in the 2018-2019 State Budget

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June 28, 2017

It would be easy to quibble with a state budget bill that contains hundreds of pages and lots of changes. That approach, however, would miss the two key elements of the 2018-2019 state budget for which the Ohio General Assembly should be applauded. As someone who predicted both the [fiscal crisis Ohio](#) is now in and the [explosion in the expanded Medicaid enrollment](#), no other issues matter more to Ohio's future than keeping state spending in check and repealing Governor John Kasich's wrong-headed Medicaid expansion under Obamacare. In fact, Opportunity Ohio ran two videos (on [spending](#) and [expanded Medicaid](#)) over the last six months aimed at educating policymakers and Ohioans on both issues. Those videos garnered nearly 1,100,000 views on social media across Ohio and put pressure on lawmakers to do the right things.

On the first item, the Ohio General Assembly today approved a state biennial budget of roughly \$65.5 billion, which is roughly \$3.0 billion less than the current budget likely will hit. Keeping state spending in check is one of the core policy reforms in our [Reimagine Ohio](#) report issued on January 4, 2017. In that report, we note that state spending increased by more than 81 percent after adjusting for inflation from 1990 to 2016. As we said, "At a minimum, Ohio should be able to live with a two-year budget that keeps spending flat. With alleged fiscal conservatives in charge of government, it frankly shouldn't be that hard to actually reduce state spending over the next two years."

We are thrilled that Ohio's policymakers took our advice, cut state spending, and are giving taxpayers a break.

On the second item, the state budget contained a provision that freezes the Medicaid expansion program starting next July. As of July 1, 2018, no new enrollees will be accepted and if someone currently in the program makes enough money to push them out of the program, they could not rejoin the program if their income fell below the 138 percent threshold again. Functionally, the Medicaid expansion freeze puts proper fiscal and enrollment constraints in place to ensure that Medicaid does not continue to require funding cuts in other vital programs or tax increases. These concerns are especially critical given the likelihood of major reforms in the Medicaid program being debated in Congress.

Again, we are ecstatic that Ohio's legislators heard our appeal and pushed back on Governor Kasich by stopping the fiscal bleeding on Medicaid before it is too late. They should override any veto issued by Governor Kasich on this policy reform.

Along with putting taxpayers ahead of single adults without kids who largely are the beneficiaries of Medicaid expansion, the Ohio General Assembly sent a loud and clear message to Republicans in Washington, D.C., to ignore Governor Kasich's complaints and **reform Medicaid NOW**. This message is a vital one that could tip the balance, as the U.S. Senate debates Obamacare's repeal and replacement. Hopefully, Congress will mimic the Ohio General Assembly and do the right thing.