

## Governor DeWine, Lt. Governor Husted Release Statements Following Court Decision that Temporarily Blocks Social Media Parental Notification Act Law was to go into effect January 15, 2024

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor Jon Husted released the following statements after Chief Judge Algenon L. Marbley, the United States District Judge for the Southern District of Ohio, Eastern Division, granted tech lobbying group NetChoice's request to temporarily stop the Social Media Parental Notification Act from being enforced beginning January 15 while their request for a preliminary injunction is pending. NetChoice represents Meta and other social media giants.

"I supported the Social Media Parental Notification Act because parents should have a role in their children's social media use," said Governor DeWine. "The negative effects that social media sites and apps have on our children's mental health have been well documented, and this law was one way to empower parents to have a role in their kids' digital lives. I am disappointed in this injunction and hope it will be lifted as the case further proceeds so these important protections for children can take effect."

"I'm very disappointed in today's ruling," said Lt. Governor Husted. "The big-tech compa-



nies behind this lawsuit were included in the legislative process to make sure the law was clear and easy to implement, but now they claim the law is unclear. They were disingenuous participants in the process and have no interest in protecting children."

The Social Media Parental Notification Act requires certain online companies to obtain verifiable parental consent to contractual terms of service before permitting kids under the age of 16 to use their platforms. This proposal was championed by Lt. Governor Husted, passed by the General Assembly, and signed into law by Governor Mike DeWine as part of the 2023-24 executive budget and was to take effect on January 15, 2024.

The law also includes a requirement for

companies to provide parents with their privacy guidelines to show them what will be censored or moderated content on their child's profile.

About the Social Media Parental Notification Act: **Companies must:**

Create a method to determine whether the user is a child under the age of 16.

Obtain verifiable parental or legal guardian consent.

Send written confirmation of the consent to the parent or legal guardian.

If the user indicates that they are under the age of 16, the following methods can be used for verification:

Sign a digital form consenting to the terms of service.

Use a credit card, debit card, or other online

payment system.

Call a toll-free telephone number.

Connect to trained personnel via video-conference.

Check a form of government-issued identification.

**Who this includes:**

Social media and online gaming/activities companies accessed by children

**Who this does NOT include:**

E-commerce: Online shopping

Media outlets

If a parent or legal guardian fails or refuses to consent to the terms of service, the company must deny access or use of the online website, online service, online product, or online feature by the child. In cases in which operators fail to provide notification or a parent wishes to terminate a child's access, parents should contact the website operator who then has 30 days to terminate the child's access. If parents are unsuccessful in the account being deleted, they are encouraged to file a complaint with the Ohio Attorney General's Office at OhioProtects.org.

## Governor DeWine, Lt. Governor Husted Announce Support for Citywide Broadband Expansion in Cleveland Broadband Ohio to Support Launch of Citywide Broadband Network with \$10 Million Grant

(CLEVELAND, Ohio)—Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor Jon Husted joined Cleveland Mayor Justin M. Bibb, Cleveland City Council President Blaine Griffin, and DigitalC CEO Joshua Edmonds this afternoon to announce an historic investment in a large-scale broadband expansion project to make high-speed, dependable internet more accessible and affordable for the entire city of Cleveland.

Connecting Cleveland

The Ohio Department of Development's BroadbandOhio is partnering with the city of Cleveland and Cleveland-based nonprofit DigitalC to create a broadband network that will offer high-speed, low-cost internet service across Cleveland, which was identified as the worst-connected large city in 2019 by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance.

"In a world where the internet has become nearly as essential as electricity, we know how important it is that our citizens are connected," said Governor DeWine. "We are committed to closing the digital divide in Ohio – not just in rural parts of the state, but also right here in urban centers like Cleveland where affordability can be more of an obstacle than access."

BroadbandOhio is supplying \$10 million in grant funding for the project, while the city of Cleveland is providing up to \$20 million in financial support. Contributions from the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Supporting Foundation, the David and Inez Myers Foundation, and other sources will also aid the project, which has an estimated total cost of \$53 million.

"If we want all Ohioans to participate in the modern economy, education, and healthcare sys-

tems, then we need to make sure that they have access to affordable, high-speed Internet," said Lt. Governor Husted. "While many underserved communities are in rural Ohio, Cleveland is an example of an underserved urban community. Through this investment, we hope to improve lives by con-



necting people to important services and opportunities."

DigitalC plans to officially break ground on the citywide broadband expansion project this month and is aiming for the entirety of Cleveland's 170,000 households to have access to low-cost broadband by the middle of next year. The price to access the network will be locked in at just \$18 per month for at least 10 years, only allowing for changes due to inflation after the fifth year.

"We all know high-speed internet is simply a requirement to live, work, and play in the world today. This incredible investment and partnership from the State will help us accomplish our vision of ensuring every single Clevelander will have access to an affordable, powerful internet plan. It

doesn't matter what neighborhood you are in or how much money you make – if you live in Cleveland, you will be able to use this necessary utility for only \$18 per month," said Mayor Bibb. "That's \$216 per year – a perfect fit synonymous to the area code of Clevelanders."

"Investing in the infrastructure that connects our communities is an investment in the hopes and dreams of every Cleveland resident," said Lydia Mihalik, director of the Ohio Department of Development. "This funding will play a pivotal role in making high-speed internet accessible to all, fostering inclusivity and providing more opportunities for growth in this great city."

In addition to providing low-cost internet service, DigitalC will also work to encourage Cleveland residents to adopt and use broadband by offering basic coaching and digital literacy training.

"This landmark investment underscores Ohio's unwavering dedication to ensure every resident has access to fully participate in the digital world without barriers," said Edmonds.

"We are deeply appreciative of this transformative grant from BroadbandOhio; this support, in conjunction with trailblazing contributions from a coalition of public, private, and philanthropic partners, will propel this state-of-the-art citywide network forward and ensure an equitable digital future for our city."

Since its inception in 2015, DigitalC has connected more than 2,000 Cleveland households to broadband internet, including the homes of more than 900 students in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

This project builds on the DeWine-Husted Administration's efforts to expand and enhance broadband connectivity for families across northeast Ohio. Since BroadbandOhio was established more than three years ago, the state has dedicated \$245 million to connecting more than 135,000 homes to reliable and affordable high-speed internet. This funding includes nearly \$10 million in grants awarded in July 2022 to help nonprofit PCs for People expand internet access to roughly 25,000 Cuyahoga County households. The project provided internet to these communities for \$15 a month and, in some cases, free of charge.

## Governor DeWine Announces Nomination of Adam Heffron to Lead the Ohio Expo Center and State Fair

**January 08, 2024 (COLUMBUS, Ohio)**—Ohio Governor Mike DeWine today announced that from the candidates sent by the Search Committee of the Ohio Expositions Commission and State Fair, he is recommending the appointment of Adam Heffron to be the new executive director of the Ohio Expo Center and State Fair. Heffron will replace long-time General Manager Virgil Strickler, who is retiring.

Heffron comes to Ohio from his position as the Director of Dane County's (Madison, WI) Alliant Energy Center, a multi-venue events center hosting agricultural and other large events in Wisconsin's state capital.

"I am excited to welcome Adam Heffron back to Ohio to lead the next period of growth and development at the Ohio State Fair," said Governor Mike DeWine. "Adam has the experience and passion to make our state fair the best in the nation. He will lead the changes outlined in the Expo 2050 plan that will make our fairgrounds even better for fairgoers, exhibitors, and other visitors."

Heffron has more than 30 years of experience in the hospitality and entertainment industry, including organizing major music and

agricultural events.

Heffron worked in the industry in leadership positions with the Wisconsin State Fair, Washington State Fair, Meet Minneapolis: Convention & Visitors Association, the Minnesota State Fair, and the Ohio Expo Center and State Fair.

In addition to his agricultural events experience, Heffron was Director of Facilities and Operations for Milwaukee World Festival, Inc. which produces Summerfest, one of the world's largest music festivals, generating \$187 million in economic impact for the Milwaukee community.

"I am excited to step into this role and build upon the incredible legacy of Virgil Strickler by helping to make the Governor's 2050 vision a reality. I look forward to bringing my diverse experiences to the table to lead Ohio's state fair and expo center in becoming the best in the nation," said Heffron.

Heffron's appointment must be confirmed by a vote of the members of the Ohio Expositions Commission. Commission Chair Angela Krile notified members today of a special meeting to be held at 3:00 p.m. in Kasich Hall on January 10, 2024 to conduct the vote. Following a positive vote by the Commission, Heffron is expected to start in March.

## Governor DeWine Calls Special Election for Ohio's 6th Congressional District



(COLUMBUS, Ohio) **January 04, 2024**—Governor DeWine announced special election dates for the 6th Congressional District to fill the District's upcoming vacancy. The election schedule will include a partisan primary occurring on March 19th, 2024, and the general election occurring on June 11th, 2024.

Rep. Bill Johnson formally communicated

with the Governor his resignation effective January 21st, 2024 at the end of the day. The formal communication of the resignation allows the Governor to call the special election and issue a Writ of Election.

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

January 19th: Declaration of candidates for partisan candidates must be filed with the Mahoning County Board of Elections by 4:00 p.m.

January 24th: The Mahoning County Board of Elections must certify the names of the candidates that will appear on the special primary ballot to Washington, Noble, Monroe, Belmont, Harrison, Jefferson, Carroll, Tuscarawas, Stark and Columbiana county boards of elections.

March 19th: The Special Election Congressional Primary takes place.

June 11th: The Special Congressional General Election takes place.

